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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE FACE BEFORE HIM WAS THE FACE OF VIOLA, COUNTESS OF DESMOND.]

## DOLLY'S LEGACY.

### CHAPTER II.

JOHN DEVEREUX and Madelaine Charteris seemed as unsuited to each other as they possibly could be. Even society itself had been surprised to hear of their engagement; but the Countess Charteris and Lady Desmond were sisters, and almost from the birth of Madelaine it had been a pet scheme of the two mothers to marry her to her cousin.

Her mother died before she was in her teens; her father was in India; and so it came about that he never heard the scandals that made Viscount Devereux's name notorious; and when he came home to England and saw his daughter in all the budding beauty of seventeen he thought it the most natural thing in the world that her cousin should be over head and ears in love with her.

Madelaine went up to her own room and rang for her maid. Her dark hair was soon coiled afresh, and her velvet costume exchanged for

an elegant pink cashmere, trimmed with lace.

The attendant retired, and the young heiress turned for a moment to look at her own fair image in the glass.

She was very pretty. Bright eyes, soft silky hair, a clear, fresh colour, and frank, open features.

Madelaine knew she was fair to see, but she knew also she had not a tithe of the beauty of the young girl she had seen just now singing in the streets.

"Jack must love me very much to think me prettier than her," and Madelaine gave a little half-sigh. "Sometimes I wish he didn't care quite so much; he is always worrying about being married, and I should like to stay just as I am for ages. It is so nice, now papa has come home! When I was down at Field Royal with aunt Matilda I think I rather liked the idea of being married, because it would take me away from her, but now papa has come home I feel quite different. How odd it is!" and she shivered slightly. "How glad I am I have not got to earn money by singing in the streets! Poor girl! I wish I had gone

to her and comforted her; she was so pretty and so young! I don't believe she was a day older than I am."

She little guessed the scene that had taken place almost before she was half within the shelter of her own room.

Jack, her own Jack, whom she often reproached herself for not loving as he did her, had stolen noiselessly from his uncle's house, and advanced stealthily to the side of the beautiful singer.

"I thought you would not escape me," he said, in a low, hissing tone. "Ah, my pretty wild bird, you had better not tire your wings by useless flutterings. Smile on one who is ready to adore you, and—"

He was interrupted. The girl raised one of her hands, white and small as Madelaine's own, and deliberately struck him.

"Leave me in peace," she said, indignantly, "if you have any generosity in your nature!"

He scowled for a moment at her; then his face resumed its cruel, false smile.

"I am quite willing to follow the maxim of religious people, and return good for evil. A

kiss for a blow is, I think, the proper phrase."

He had come nearer to her, so near that his hot breath touched her cheek, when a close brougham stopped at his uncle's house. Jack started. Another moment and the Earl of Charteris would descend and witness his daughter's fiancé's honourable occupation. Viscount Devereux retreated promptly.

"We shall meet again," he said, slowly. "You will not always shun me. I will conquer the hatred shining in your eyes. Remember, I have sworn it, and I never yet failed in aught I undertook!"

Dolly trembled. She was too thankful for her present escape to think of the future. The instant his hand had released her arm she turned down a narrow by-street, and not till she was out of sight of Lord Devereux did she even stop to look at the shining coin Lady Madeline had thrown her.

It was half-a-sovereign!  
"How pretty she was!" thought Dolly, "and how beautiful her dress looked! I suppose she lives in that grand house. Oh, dear! how I wish I had been born rich, with plenty of money and kind friends!"

She stopped herself abruptly. She remembered she had a mother. Had she been alighting that patient, devoted mother by her wish? Had she seemed to despise her faithful love? The girl's generous heart smote her with a keen pang.

She did not attempt another song. She walked quietly back to her mother.

Mrs. Ford's little servant was standing on the steps. The moment she caught sight of her face Dolly knew there was something wrong.

She tried to speak, but the question she would fain have asked struck in her throat, and she could only rush on as fast as her trembling feet would carry her to the room where her mother lay.

There was a change in the patient; now Dolly could see that, but she thought it a change for the better. Mrs. Smith seemed so much calmer. The wild, delicious look had died out of her eyes; she looked just her old self, only being worn and weak.

"Speak to her," said Mrs. Ford, in a low voice. "She has been asking for you this half-hour."

"Mother—oh, mother!"  
The face brightened, the thin lips tried to smile even in their death agony at that loved voice.

"Dolly, I'm going away."

The girl understood too well what she meant.

"Not yet, mother," pleaded Dolly; "not yet. You'd never go without me, and leave me all alone."

Mrs. Smith trembled.  
"I'd stay longer if I could. It's a hard, rough world, my sweet one, and there's much sorrow before your tender feet. Tell me, Dolly, would you like to be rich?"

It was a strange question to ask upon her death-bed—strange inquiry to come from the lips of a woman so poor the parish might have to bury her; but evidently she wanted it answered.

"I think so," said Dolly, faintly, "if you were with me—not without. Riches couldn't make me happy alone."

Mrs. Smith sighed.  
"Maybe I've been mistaken," she said, faintly. "When I'm cold and dead you may hear strange things of me, but my child, I did it for the best. You might have been rich. I made you poor; but it was all from love."

Dolly kissed her. She quite believed her mother's mind was wandering.

"I shall see your father up there," went on Mrs. Smith, feebly. "After all, he was the one I wronged the most; but I think he'll forgive me."

"Surely," said Dolly, trying to comfort her.

"And, my darling, promise me two things.

I can't die easily, Dolly, unless I have your word."

"I will promise."  
"Never make a friend of a Devereux."

Dolly started. Coming as it did after her meeting with the Viscount this charge impressed her strangely. Could a kind of second sight have been vouchsafed to her mother? Could she possibly know of what had taken place only that evening?

"They are false—every one! They brought great misery on your father and mother. They would bring the same on you."

"I am not likely to meet them, mother dear."

"You will meet them," said Mrs. Smith, positively, clasping her thin hands; "something tells me so. It may be impossible to help seeing them; but, Dolly, never treat them. When their words are kindest fear them most!"

Dorothea began to think that illness had turned her mother's brain, but there was no resisting the entreaty of those fast-glancing eyes, and she gave the promise solemnly.

"I am almost happy now," said Mrs. Smith. "One thing more, and I can meet your father."

She took from under her pillow the shabby, discoloured egg which had so long been Dorothea's aversion. Throughout her illness this treasure had never been beyond her reach. Mrs. Ford had thought her devotion to it the worst sign of her illness until Dolly told her that ever since she could recollect her mother had set the same store by that egg.

"You see this?"

"Yes," breathed Dolly.

"It was your father's first gift to your mother. Remember, it was her legacy to you. Promise me, child, as you love me, never to part from it."

Ten minutes later all was over. Dolly was doubly an orphan, and sat in the dim, solitary room, weeping pitifully her very heart would break. It was not three weeks since the night she had walked so alone down Regent-street, and, all went on as of old, as of old she seemed to have come to her!

Three weeks she had been poor, certainly, but she had possessed a comfortable if humble home, and a mother to stand between her and the world's cold frowns. She had been in a fair way ere long to earn a sufficient living. Now she was homeless, friendless!

She could never return to Madame Marguerite's because (this hurt her most of all—oh, how she blushed to recall it!) her mother had removed her from there by force. No other dressmaker would take her without a reference. There seemed nothing before her but starvation.

One memory would come to her that New Year's night as she sat alone in her misery—the kind stranger who had come to her rescue in Regent-street, and promised to call and talk over her future with her mother.

Oh! if he had only been allowed to come! He seemed so good and true, so brave and generous! He would surely have given her his help in this bitter need.

But Dolly could not write to him—she did not even know his name. She might have gone to Elizabeth-street and left her present address, should he call; but a nameless something held her back.

Her mother's last thought had been to hide her from the discovery even of this friend. She might be said to have caught her death by doing so. Dolly could not make her sacrifice of no effect.

"What are your future plans?"  
It was the doctor who asked her this question, the day after her mother's death.

He had daughters of his own at home, and he spoke very kindly and quietly to the lonely orphan.

"I don't know, sir."

"Have you no friends?"

She shook her head.

"And no money?"

"I think there will be enough for the

expenses," she said, nervously. "Mother had some fine old lace, and Mrs. Ford is going to sell it for me."

Dr. Pemberton rather doubted not Mrs. Ford's honesty and good will, but her ability. He knew that she would find it very difficult to gain access to the style of customer rich enough to buy old lace.

"I think we might help you in that, if you like to call and see my wife. She may be able to find you a purchaser. It is soon for you to go out, after your loss," he said, feelingly, "but Mrs. Pemberton cannot come to you, in this bitter wind. She is a great invalid, and rarely leaves the house in winter."

"I suppose I had better go," said Dolly, when she and Mrs. Ford were left alone; "but, oh! I dread it! I never can talk to strangers, and now it will be worse than ever!"

"You won't mind talking to Mrs. Pemberton, dear, she is so kind. Yes, I think you had better go to-day."

### CHAPTER III.

DR. PEMBERTON was not a fashionable physician. He had a large and lucrative practice; but as he never could bring himself to treat fine ladies as invalids when there was nothing the matter with them but *ennui*, his patients were chiefly in the class who are ill because they can't help it.

But he was a man of large private means, and his wife's relations were very aristocratic people, therefore it will be seen Mrs. Pemberton was far more likely to be able to forward Dolly's wishes than her humble landlady.

"Will you come into the drawing-room, mistress, at home?" was the greeting Dolly received from the trim page who opened the door to her, when he had looked at the card, with a few words scribbled in the doctor's hand, which was Dolly's introduction.

From her childhood Dolly had never spoken to a lady, a real lady, as she would have named it. Certainly now and then at Madame Marguerite's she had been privileged to behold such famous models, when they came to give their orders to the fashionable modiste; she had even two or three times been honoured by admission to the fitting-room, to hold the measure the experienced "trier on;" but still she had remained, she had never been inside a lady's house, or spoken to a gentleman.

She followed the page in silent suspense down the long corridor to a recess, where velvet curtains were closely drawn; he pushed these aside, opened a door, and ushered Dolly into an apartment, whose temperature made her think it was August instead of January.

It was the loveliest room she had ever entered. Yet there was nothing overwhelming in its splendour. It was emphatically a room to be used, and that people daily sat in. You could move in it without fear of doing damage, and might even employ yourself without feeling you were taking a liberty.

It was of moderate size, and carpeted in velvet pile; the furniture was in ebony and myrtle green velvet, but to alleviate the sombre hue of this, there were quantities of lace curtains and antimacassars, and a thick white fleecy hearthrug, a piano, a harp, a small writing-table, a well-filled bookcase. All gave evidence that the apartment was not only for show.

A very slight, elegant-looking woman rose from a low chair by the fire, and came forward to meet Dolly.

"I think you must be Miss Smith," she said, taking the orphan's hand, and placing her a seat near her own. "My husband said I was to expect you."

"Yes," said Dolly, nervously.

Poor Dolly, she had never felt more shy and nervous. She longed to speak gratefully, but she could not. (I should not be surprised if Isola Pemberton understood, her eyes had read the girl pretty thoroughly, and she knew she was sad, not sullen.)

"I wish I could have come to you," she said, gently. "Both my daughters are away,



or I would have sent them to you. Let me look at the lace."

It was lovely old point, and had probably once adorned a dress. There was a quantity of it, and it was in perfect condition.

Isola thought she had never seen any finer. "My dear," she said, kindly, "do you know this is very valuable?"

"I thought so. Mother earned our living by mending lace. Once, when things were very bad, she offered this to the shop she worked for, but they would only give ten pounds, and she thought it was worth more."

"It is worth fifty pounds, at the very least."

Dolly clasped her hands. "If I could only sell it soon!" she said, with a little sob, "so that it was in time for—"

Mrs. Pemberton knew what she meant. Her husband had guessed the idea of a pauper funeral was wringing the girl's heart.

"You need have no fear of that; we will advance you the money for the lace if it has not met with a customer by to-morrow."

"But—"

"We shall be no losers," said Mrs. Pemberton, gently. "I know several people who would be delighted to purchase lace like this. I wish I could help you in other ways, Miss Smith; you are so young to be left alone."

"I am seventeen."

"The doctor says you have no relations."

"No, I must earn my own living," and Dolly gave a weary little sigh. "I don't mind that, only—"

"Only you feel lonely!"

"That is just it!" and the girl's eyes filled.

"However I get on now it must all be for myself, and I can never make mother pleased or happy."

"You have not thought of your plans at all!"

"Yes," said Dolly, simply; "I was awake all night, and I kept thinking. I don't want to leave Mrs. Ford. If I could only get needlework I shouldn't mind how long I sat at it, so that I earned just enough to keep myself."

Mrs. Pemberton looked at her and sighed.

"I don't think that would answer."

"I can work very quickly."

"Yes; but you are very young and pretty. London is not the right place for you now you have no mother. My dear child, you ought to go into some family, where you would be safe and cared for."

Dolly shuddered.

"I couldn't go to service!" she said, faintly;

"I think the thought of it would kill me!"

"I never dreamed of such a thing!" said Mrs. Pemberton, quickly; "indeed, it never entered my thoughts."

"And I am not clever," went on Dolly; "I never went to school in my life."

Mrs. Pemberton looked thoughtful.

"I know of one situation I think you might fill; the salary is not large, but the duties are light, and you would have a comfortable home in the country."

A faint flush of pleasure came to the girl's pale cheeks.

"Mother used to talk of the country once," she said, quickly; "she lived there. She was always wishing I could see it, if only for a day."

"You would live all the year round in a beautiful country house," went on Mrs. Pemberton; "you would have rooms to yourself, and plenty of time to improve yourself; and your duties would be the care and companionship of a little crippled girl."

"Children always like me," said Dolly, cheerfully, "and I am very fond of them."

"Mabel is eleven or twelve, I forget which. She has to lie on the sofa a great part of each day. Her elder sisters are grown up, and busy with gaieties; the younger ones are at school. It is a dull life for any child, especially one with such an affliction. Her mother has written to ask me to find her a suitable person, half-governess, half-companion, to go down at once. She only offers twenty pounds a year,

which is the reason the situation is still unfilled."

They were interrupted; the page announced Lady Madeline Charteris.

Dolly would have withdrawn, but Mrs. Pemberton signed to her to remain.

Another moment, and she felt herself blushing to her finger tips.

This young patrician beauty, in her velvet and furs, was the benefactress who last night had flung her that golden coin.

For one instant Dolly wished the ground would open and swallow her up; then she sat quite still, and felt able to bear even recognition, for she had done no wrong. There was nothing to be ashamed of in having sung for money to help her dying mother.

Madeline did not recognise her. Dolly in Mrs. Ford's bonnet and heavy shawl (put on because the widow wished her friend to appear in mourning) was a very different Dolly from the songstress. The girl in the streets had worn a small hat, showing her small, mobile face; this Dolly had a thick crepe veil. She had lowered it just as Madeline entered, and so if the young heiress had looked at her at all she would have deemed her a depressed-looking widow.

"Cousin Isola," began the girl, as soon as she was seated, "I had a letter from Aunt Matilda this morning, and she wants to know when you are going to send her someone for Mabel."

"As soon as I can, Madeline; it is only a fortnight since she wrote."

"But she wants to go to Paris almost directly to meet the girls, and uncle won't have Mabel left alone."

"Aren't you going down to Field Royal, Madeline?"

"Oh, no," and Lady Madeline blushed.

"Papa says he can't spare me."

"I suppose he will have to spare you altogether soon now?"

"Nothing is settled."

"I thought Lord Devereux was such an impatient lover? The last time I saw him he talked of Easter for the wedding."

"Jack is fond of being in a hurry," said Madeline. "I am quite happy as I am."

Perhaps she remembered someone else was present, for she began to talk of indifferent matters. She barely stayed ten minutes in all, and she did not again allude to her engagement.

Lady Madeline is the niece of my friend, Lady Desmond," said Mrs. Pemberton. "I detained you because I thought she might have some message from the Countess. Really, Miss Smith, I think the situation would suit you. I have heard enough of your tenderness to your mother in her illness to be sure you would be patient with an invalid. If you like I will write to Lady Desmond, and say I have engaged you."

"I have no references."

Oh! how her voice trembled as she made the confession! It went to Mrs. Pemberton's heart. She was silent just a minute, then she said, kindly,—

"If you have never been from home, and have no friends, I do not see how we can expect references. I think Dr. Pemberton's recommendation will be all-sufficient, so I shall write, and tell Lady Desmond to expect you in a fortnight."

And, as Dolly walked briskly home, the greatest relief she experienced was the thought that in a fortnight she would be safe from the molestations of that objectionable young nobleman, Viscount Devereux.

Field Royal had altered very much since the days of the Countess Viola. In his youth, the present Earl had been far more popular than his late brother; but after Viola's death the neighbourhood seemed to take up the idea he and his wife were not blameless in the matter, and shunned them pretty thoroughly until they came into the title.

Even then the new Lord Desmond was poor for his position; he had just one-third of his predecessor's income, and a large family. It

was difficult for him to entertain his neighbours as his ancestors had done. So Field Royal gradually lost its character as the most hospitable house in Northshire. The Desmonds received visitors and returned them, but their position as leaders of all festivities had gone for ever.

One by one the old servants had been dismissed until only the housekeeper remained, and she was kept, people said, because, having a handsome annuity from the late Earl, she required no salary from his brother's wife.

Mrs. Bond was a good, motherly soul. She had never taken kindly with her present mistress, but she clung with a sort of feudal attachment to the family. She had served so long, and tried hard, since she could not like their mother, at least to be fond of the children. It was hard work, but in one case she had succeeded easily—little Lady Mabel was dear to her as her own child.

Lady Mabel had not always been a cripple. Till she was five years old she was a smart, healthy child. Then came the accident which made her lame for life; and then, seeing she never could be as other children were, her mother's love forsook her, and she Countess hated her—hated her so much that she would not even postpone her trip to Paris till the now companion engaged solely for Mabel's benefit could arrive.

"Lady Mabel will do very well with you, Bond, for a few days. I expect the governess next week. You can let me know if she comes."

Bond was furious.

"Just to deliver that poor child over to a woman she's never seen, and not even to wait to see how the poor lamb takes to her! Miss Smith may be very nice, but, then, she mayn't."

The butler interposed. He and Mrs. Bond were very good friends, though she looked down on him as being new in the family's service. He had held his post about ten years.

"They do say Mrs. Pemberton had the choosing of the governess, Mrs. Bond, so she can't be such a—"

Not a Mrs. Pemberton had the finding of her. She's a sweet woman, if ever there was one."

"Who'd ever think she was own cousin to my lady?" demanded Jenkins.

The family departed, all but Mabel, and Mrs. Bond did her best to take care of her favourite and cheer her up, but it was a difficult task. The child was nervous, and had a positive dread of strangers; add to that the fact that for years her mother had held the threat of a governess over her head as the most dreadful punishment she could think of, and you have some idea of the anticipations with which Lady Mabel looked forward to Miss Smith's advent.

"I know she'll be horrid, Bond," said the spoilt child, with all the feebleness of an invalid, "and I shall hate her."

"You'll like her very much, Lady Mabel."

"No I shan't."

"Wait and see."

"I had a letter from Madeline the other day," said Mab, ruefully, "and she had seen her."

"Didn't Lady Madeline like her?"

"She said she was quite old, and looked like a widow. I wanted someone young and bright."

"Widows aren't always old, Lady Mab; besides, the lady who's coming is Miss Smith, so she can't be a widow."

But it was a relief to them all when the day came for the arrival. Lady Mabel was persuaded to be dressed in her white muslin and crimson sash, and to wait tea for Miss Smith, who, it was calculated, would be at Field Royal about six; really, it was half-an-hour earlier when the hired fly drew up at the old porticoed entrance.

Mrs. Bond was detained in Lady Mabel's room, but the nurse, as the next most important female servant, received the governess

and ushered her into two pretty rooms communicating, and furnished as bedroom and sitting-room. This functionary, whom Dolly's arrival would relieve of half her work, was particularly gracious.

"The men 'll bring up your baggage directly, miss, and Lady Mabel's waiting tea. Mrs. Bond, the housekeeper, 'll come and take you to her as soon as she can. All the family are away."

"Is the little girl all alone?"

"That's nothing new, miss; the Countess never will be troubled with Lady Mabel if she can help it. She's delicate, poor child, and the least thing makes her fret."

Left alone Dolly wondered if she was the victim of a dream. It seemed impossible that that pretty room and its elegant furniture could possibly be for her.

Fortunately Mrs. Pemberton had handed a very handsome sum to Dolly as the price of the lace, and had also given her some kind hints as to her wardrobe.

When she had changed her dress, and stood waiting for Mrs. Bond to take her downstairs, it would have been hard to find a more elegant-looking girl than the one who, a fortnight ago, had sung for money in the streets.

Yet, she only wore a black spun silk dress, but, then, it fitted close to her taper figure, and the crêpe trimmed at the throat and sleeves only enhanced the whiteness of her neck and wrists; her beautiful hair glistened like threads of gold, her violet eyes had a touching pathos in their depths, the flickering firelight seemed to make a sort of halo round her head, and she looked like anything in the world rather than a penniless dependent.

The door opened and Mrs. Bond entered, Dolly turned to meet her, and for an instant they stood face to face—only an instant. Then, with a startled cry, the housekeeper sank on to a chair, trembling in every limb.

Frightened at this sudden illness, as she deemed it, Dolly asked gently if she could do anything for her, or if she should ring for assistance.

"No, oh, no!" gasped the housekeeper. "I shall be better presently; it was a kind of spasm."

Dolly thought it a very painful one, and expressed her sympathy. By degrees Mrs. Bond grew better; the ruddy colour returned to her cheeks, and she expressed herself able to go downstairs.

"Tis but a cold reception for you, miss, the family all away, and—"

Dolly smiled sweetly.

"I came to be useful, you know, not for pleasure. If only Lady Mabel will like me I shall be quite content."

"Lady Mabel may like you," thought the good housekeeper to herself, "but her mother won't. Poor child! your face will be a fatal blow to her. I reckon you'll not stay here long after the Countess comes home."

But aloud she said nothing of this, she made some homely speech of welcome, and then opened a door to show a tea-table, loaded with silver and china and the good things of this life.

"Lady Mabel, here is your governess!"

Lady Mabel gave a little cry.

"You look just like a fairy," she said, ruefully. "I'm afraid you'll vanish away."

"Not while you want me."

"But you're so pretty, much too pretty for a governess. Madeline said you were old and cross, and looked just like a widow."

Dolly smiled.

"Perhaps she meant because I was in deep mourning."

The child looked round sharply.

"Who's it for?"

"My mother."

Mrs. Bond seemed to be listening to the conversation as though chained to the spot by some strange fascination. Here she put in a question.

"And your father, might I make bold to ask, miss, is he alive still?"

"Oh, no! he died before mamma. I had no one in the world but mother."

As the days passed on Lady Mabel and Dolly became fast friends; the child who had so few to love and the lonely orphan seemed attracted to each other as by a spell. Never in the memory of the servants had Mabel been better or happier since her accident. Glowing accounts were sent by the housekeeper to Lady Desmond, and Field Royal generally rejoiced at Mrs. Pemberton's choice.

And the choice herself?

Dolly felt happier than she had thought possible. She had never taken kindly to household duties, had ever hated the daily routine of the dressmaker's workroom. To sit with Mabel and hear her simple lessons, to study with her under the masters who came twice a week from Chestow, or drive along the beautiful country lanes—all this was a new life to Dolly; and then in the gloaming, before the lamps were lighted, she used to go to the piano and amuse herself with the low, sweet melodies which she played so perfectly, although she had never learned a note of music.

She had not forgotten her mother, she never could forget her; the old battered egg which was her legacy was packed away in Dolly's box—she could not bear the sight of it. But the other, that her mysterious friend had bought for her to give her mother, was in her workbox. She often thought of him and wondered if he had been in the least disappointed to find her gone when he called at Elizabeth-street. Oh! how the sound of his voice haunted her. Oh! what would she not have given just to see his true, kind face again!

Dolly was a general favourite with the servants, only the old housekeeper regarded her with a pitying kindness which half puzzled the girl. Mrs. Bond seemed to Dolly to take almost too much interest in her; without being inquisitive she was always eager to know about Dolly's past; and once, when the girl mentioned heedlessly that she should be eighteen next September, the poor housekeeper was taken with another attack of trembling almost like the one she had on the night of Miss Smith's arrival.

"I don't like it," muttered Mrs. Bond to herself one night in her own snug sitting-room, "I can't make it out. Of course there are plenty of girls who will be eighteen next September, and I daresay some of them have eyes like that. But I don't like it; and, oh! what will my lady say when she comes home?"

But apparently my lady was not coming home; yet no date for her return had been spoken of. Mabel seemed likely to be the only representative of the family at Field Royal for some time to come, when one afternoon Mrs. Bond looked in upon Dolly and her pupil with a startled piece of news.

"What will you say's going to happen, my lady?" she asked the child. "Who do you think's coming to-night? I've just had a telegram to say so."

"Not father?" asked the child.

It was easy to tell from her tone "father" was the best-beloved of all her relations.

"No, my dear; it's your brother. He's coming for a week's hunting, and brings three or four friends with him."

"I don't care."

"But you should care, my dear," said the old woman, reprovingly. "Viscount Devereux's a fine young gentleman, as 'll be Lord Desmond; besides, dear, he's your own brother."

Neither of them noticed Dolly's face grow ashen white. The name was a revelation to her. Could it be possible her cruel persecutor was Mabel's brother? Must she meet him here in his father's house?

Oh! why had she never guessed it before? All Mabel's belongings bore the monogram "M.D." Of course, the D. stood for Devereux, while she, unlearned in aristocracy as she was, had believed that an earl's daughter,

like a commoner's, had the same name as her father.

Yes, that was it. That poor suffering child was Mabel Devereux, not Mabel Desmond, and she (Dolly) was in the house that must one day belong to her tormentor.

"I'm very sorry," said Mab, slowly; "but perhaps, he'll not come here. I don't like Jack; he always laughs at me."

Dolly could well believe it. To laugh at anything weak and helpless was quite among the qualities she attributed to the Viscount.

Four young men, all of good families, going down for a week's hunting in the country! Three of them knew not the meaning of care, three of them had never had a real trouble. No wonder the journey was a pleasant one—no wonder the quartet had a very cheerful time of it that bright March day as they travelled to Northshire.

None of the guests were very much attached to their host. They got on very fairly with him, found him an amusing companion; but they would have hated the idea of trusting a sister to his keeping.

Herbert Sinclair, Ivor Vernon, and George Dugdale were all between twenty-five and thirty, and in mind and heart superior to Viscount Devereux.

"We shall have a good time of it," said Devereux, amiably. "My mother and the girls are in Paris. We shall have the whole house to ourselves, and no one to trouble us."

"What a misanthropical sentiment for a married man!"

"I'm not married yet."

"You're next door to it."

None of the visitors had been to Field Royal before, and they all looked with admiration on the lovely grounds. Herbert Sinclair, who was an artist, specially noticed the river's winding course.

"I suppose you're overdone with fellows sketching here in the summer."

"Not we!"

"That river would be the paradise of an artist."

"Do you know that to this river I shall owe my earldom?"

"Nonsense!"

"How?"

"Give us the history, Devereux."

This from two of the guests. The third, Herbert Sinclair, kept silent.

Nothing loth, John related how his beautiful young aunt and her unborn child had perished in the waters.

"But for which fact," he concluded, "your humble servant, and his father, too, would have been plain John Devereux all their lives."

Each of the listeners hated him for telling the story, specially for the way in which he told it; but they were men of the world, and concealed their indifference.

"You ought to have a family ghost," said Sinclair, "with such a history as that. Do you mean to say you haven't?"

"I don't know."

"Doesn't Lady Desmond's spirit haunt this river's banks? Come, man, confess."

"Not that I ever heard of."

"You're not sure?"

"The fact is since her death the spot has been shunned. This river is new to the neighbourhood, or he would never have brought us this way. Our own coachman won't take his horses past. My father and mother never come by here or take their guests. I believe if it had been possible they would have had the river filled up."

"Devereux, I shall get up the first thing to-morrow morning and explore the banks of the river thoroughly."

"You'll find nothing."

Herbert Sinclair was an artist. He loved art for its own sake, and having plenty of money followed it merely as a pleasure. The idea of a picture of the Field Royal grounds, introducing the river's bank made bare and lonely, struck him. He might call it



"Haunted." Well dished up such a subject must succeed.

Full of his purpose he was out-of-doors the next morning before seven had long struck. With some difficulty he found his way to the river, and stood looking thoughtfully upon the bright, sparkling waters.

"Who would think they hid such an awful tragedy?" he muttered to himself. "The honourable viscount is a greater wretch than I took him for, or he'd never have told that story with a laugh on his lips. Why, I have heard my mother tell it with the tears running down her cheeks, and my father with a break in his voice. I can just remember Lady Desmond, and what a fairy-like creature she was. She came to see us just after the wedding, and her husband introduced me to her as his godson. How my mother cried when the news came of her death."

His memory went back to his childhood's days. He seemed to see his godfather's beautiful young wife again. Child as he was at the time, not more than nine or ten, he had never forgotten her fair, sweet voice.

Just then a song fell on his ears. He heard the rich, sweet voice of some girl singing the old Scotch ballad, "In silk attire." He looked up to see what sort of face went with that perfect voice, and then he held his breath in bewilderment. He had talked lightly enough of the river's banks being haunted. Could it be true? He fancied so, in spite of nineteenth-century common sense disbelief in ghosts, for the face before him was the face of Viola Countess of Desmond.

(To be continued.)

#### CIVILISATION AND IMITATION.

The women and children of good Arab families were in old times never allowed to wear imitation jewellery, whether of stones or metal. The increasing taste for French civilisation is, however, fast breaking down such prejudices.

Fine ancient designs, especially of necklets, are now prepared in brass and sent out in hundreds from Damascus.

The most useful pattern is one formed of two rows of hanging fish—the shapes much degraded by repetition. This on a dark skin is very effective, and has beside the advantage of being a powerful charm.

Most neck ornaments have hanging pendants, following Egyptian precedents. One very decorative design is composed of chains formed of flat rings; the first chain fastens tight round the throat, while the others descend in increasing lengths almost to the knee. This is a most favourite pattern for wedding feasts. The flashing lights give almost the effect of chain armour.

The price is, comparatively, extremely moderate. Small fish necklaces can be bought for five francs.

Specimens of brass bracelets are much sought after by artists for their quaint designs. The whole female population of Tlemben (Oran) delight in displaying in their ears a cluster of large hoop rings made with serpents' heads brightened by coloured glass eyes or a dab of rough enamel.

Even babies in arms wear these hoops, though their little ears are torn and distorted by the weight, the metal being cheap, and the native vendor giving good measure. To relieve the ears these rings are generally looped up to a chain which is fastened on the top of the peaked cap they all wear.

Some of the chains used for looping up the earrings are very good leaf patterns, doubtless copied from old designs.

Necklaces of brass coins stamped in imitation of real ones, mixed with glass beads, are also worn, but they are not so artistic as the necklaces worn by some of the inferior castes in India, which are made of thin sheet brass in the form of leaves, and ornamented by a system of dots.

## A PLAIN GIRL.

—O—

### CHAPTER XLII.

As George said these words he stooped and kissed my hand, which still lay passive in his. "I believe in everything just as you told me, Nell, that night two years ago; but I am afraid that my belief comes too late, and that you will"—and he seemed to struggle with some word for a moment, "never—never forgive me!"

His face was very pale, and wore a curiously intense expression.

"Yes," I gasped, feeling as if my breath had been taken away by some strong wind—"yes; but it has come so suddenly now. I will forgive you. I—I—always meant to; but there is a condition."

"Name it," he said, very gravely.

"You know in stories long ago knights had always to prove their own faith by some great deeds of prowess? Generally they had three tests, three tasks—I only give you one ere you ever call me wife again, for you know you told me you cast me off as such that day. You will have to clear my father's name, and bring—and bring"—I panted, for my breath came quick and short, and I was very weak, and dreadfully agitated—"the other to justice."

"I will do my best," he said, "not merely for your sake alone, and that is more than enough to spur me to every exertion, but for the sake of that miserable, blighted, half-crazy man downstairs."

"Crazy—no! He is quite sane. His mind is embittered, warped by trouble, that is all. Mine," and my eyes filled with unbidden tears, "was going that way, too."

"Dearest!" said George, "his mind will recover; but it is off its balance now. It was, you must see yourself, the plan of a lunatic to send you unprotected, and carrying with you the very proofs of his guilt, into that man's power and presence. It was simply courting defeat to trust such a mission to a girl like you instead of to a couple of men from Scotland-yard."

"Then you don't think that it was my fault that it failed?"

"No; it could not have been otherwise. And another mad act was leaving me in the dark. That was all loss to him and you, and no gain. It was foolish and unmeaning, and the act of utter madness. Then his not at once communicating with me when I had found you out was on the same level, if not dictated by a brain and mind utterly unhinged. There is no other alternative but one, and that neither you or I would accept, namely, that your father's schemes from first to last—his taking you into his confidence, binding you religiously to secrecy even with me, making you keep stolen and utterly un-called-for appointments when he could have come to my house in open day, and, finally, using you as his cat's-paw to explode the mine on Kant—were all acts of most unscrupulous and abominable selfishness."

"Oh, no, no, no! Not that, George!" I murmured, faintly.

"Either that or the other, dearest. Look at how our lives have been nearly ruined and dragged down in the wreck of his! But that is all over now. I am going to give all my time, my energies, brains, and money to the one burning question now. If I had been in the secret two years ago this quest would be a far easier matter. To seek clues and witnesses after a lapse of twenty-two years is like one of the labours of Hercules; but I will do my best. As for your father, poor man! twenty years of convict life and all his troubles have affected his mind, there is no doubt of that. He is suspicious of every one, of even you and me; but it was his desperate anxiety about you, I must say, that at last urged him to come here and declare himself to me. He came surreptitiously, and rapped late at night at the library window. I let him in, and he was like a man quite wild with suspense. I

was glad to be able to say that you were better, and then he broke down; and how he sobbed and cried! It was heart-breaking. They had told him the worst, poor fellow! and ere he went away I knew the whole of his story."

"And you believe it?"

"Most certainly I do."

"And yet you would not believe me! Oh, George!"

"Ah, Nellie, that was different! You were my love, my life, my wife, and I was beside myself with jealousy. Jealousy blinds a man to everything else. Hearing the same facts from your father's lips they struck quite differently to what they did coming from yours, when I thought you were merely inventing them as a screen to shield yourself; and they sounded so wildly improbable that I firmly believed, Nelly, you had made up the whole story on the impulse of the moment."

"Yes, it did ostensibly sound more like fiction than truth; and what do you say now, besides believing every word of it?"

"Only one word more, for I hear my mother coming back—be quick and get well. As soon as you are able to come downstairs I shall start on what may seem a wild-goose chase; but you and I know better."

"My dear George, how you have been talking and fatiguing her, and her poor head!" said Mrs. Karalake, in a tone of tragic protest. "Here, you must really go away at once," giving him a little push, "or all my good nursing will go for nothing. She looks quite flushed. I am very sorry I listened to you," thrusting him out of the room.

"I am very glad you did, grandmamma," I said, "for I feel another person already, and ever so much further on the road to getting quite well. George—I do wish you had let him stay!—has been telling me what has made me very, very happy. He believes me at last!"

And I turned my face down on the pillows, and wept hysterically; but I was crying for joy.

"I suppose he has heard something," said the old lady, at length, when I was a little calmer. "Oh, my dear, I hope he has!"

"Yes, he has heard all from my father."

"Your father! Mercy on the child! Is that the elderly, grey gentleman that has been here so constantly, a Mr. Browne, and so often closeted with George?"

"I think so. Is he very grey, with piercing dark eyes?"

"Exactly. To think of it, that such a—but, no—"

"I know what you are about to say. That such a person should come under this roof," I went on; "but the truth is that he is as innocent as you are, Mrs. Karalake, and his innocence will be proved as clear as the noon-day yet."

"It could not be, my poor child—not after more than a score of years! Don't let your mind dwell on any such false hopes."

I looked at her in silence, and silence is sometimes more eloquent than speech. Were not all my hopes bound up in the clearing of my father's good name?

"And now," she proceeded, in a totally different key, "I will leave you entirely alone. You are to go to sleep. Sleep is most essential to your recovery," and stooping over me, and giving me a kiss like a postman's knock. "It makes me very happy, my dear daughter, to hear that you and George are friends once more. For a long time, I may tell you now—for a long time I had more than suspected that he laboured under a great mistake, and I have hinted as much to him more than once."

In another week I had so far recovered as to be able to don a tea-gown, and sit up for half-a-day, and soon I was downstairs. My appearance there was the signal, as he had promised, of George's departure.

George left; but before doing so he and I had a few words alone. He went by the night mail, and came into the little drawing-room,

where I was sitting at the fire, whilst the rest of the company were concluding dinner.

"I am off, Nellie," he said, as he came close to me, "and no one knows my real errand but yourself. I shall not come back without some news, some little clue, that will help me to drag the real criminal to light," looking down on me, as I sat half-buried in a low chair, with a world of stern resolve in his eyes. "Wish me success!"

"Need you ask it, when you know that all depends on it; when by your success, or non-success, most of my future happiness may be measured; that by it the future of the Deane name must stand or fall? I wish you"—struggling to my feet with an effort, for I was still weak and giddy—"every success."

"Then you might, perhaps, give me a kiss, Nellie, as I am going away for an indefinite time?"

He asked this rather timidly, as if not sure of one.

I would not actually do that; but I held up my cheek, and he brushed it with his moustache, and went away without another syllable.

In a few moments later I heard the wheels of the dog-cart moving quickly away on the gravel sweep outside.

I had an interview, a *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Thorn that evening also. Maggie and Captain Jervis were pretending to slug duets in the larger drawing-room, and my mother-in-law was chaperoning them, as she considered it was her duty to do so, but she was in reality tolerably sound asleep, with her knitting in her hand.

I had seen Mrs. Thorn before, I mean since our accident, but only as one of the crowd. Now she came and sat down close to me, and looked at me with a kind of restless eagerness. What did she want? What had she to say to me?

"I am going away to-morrow, Lady Karalake," she began, "and I am particularly anxious to have a few words with you first about your husband."

"Oh, of course!" I mentally ejaculated.

"It may be a very singular and indelicate thing for me to say, and say it I must. It has seemed to me that you were jealous of him and me. Oh, dear Lady Karalake, don't, pray don't look at me like that! Let me tell you my story, and then judge me. I saw by your eyes—the very first day I came here—that you misdoubted and disliked me, that you had heard something about me not to my advantage; but if you knew the truth you would only pity me. I have tried hard to melt the wall of ice you have set up between us, and it has been of no use. You are always civil and cold, but for the sake of your husband I will confide my troubles to you as if you were my bosom friend. I saw—my eyes are keen—that you and he were not very happy together, that there was some black cloud between you, that you scarcely ever spoke to or looked at one another excepting for the sake of appearances. No one guessed this but me, and I kept my discovery to myself. I had my own experiences to light me, that was how I know."

"Well, never mind pursuing the subject, Mrs. Thorn," I said. "It is not a very pleasant one, as you may fancy, and the cloud to which you have alluded is broken; we see the sky once more."

"I knew that also; but I must hurry on, for we shall be interrupted, and I am so anxious to clear myself to you."

"Have I ever accused you?" I asked, sharply.

"Not by your lips, certainly, but by your eyes. Soft as they look now they can say terrible things. That night in the pleasure-ground, for instance, they flashed into mine a look that scorched me, and said 'Woman, wretch, you have robbed me of my husband's heart,' but in truth, and to all appearances, you remarked that I had better beware of catching cold!"

"I wonder what you have heard about me!"

You won't tell me, of course, but you shall hear the truth. I married when I was nineteen, and I was an inexperienced country girl, and very much in love with Robert Thorn, who was an exceedingly good-looking assistant-surgeon, as they were then called.

"I went to India a bride, and a bride as little fitted to take up the reins of a household as any baby. I was pretty, I was fond of any amount of amusement; I was fâted, and spoilt, and had my empty heart completely turned. I should have mentioned that we were poor, that I had not a sixpence of my own, and had no idea of the value of money. I had never had the spending of half-a-crown in my life, so when Robert—who was very careless of his affairs—made over his monthly pay to me regularly, I felt like Croesus, and thought I could never come to the end of it."

"It is very easy to get into debt in India, and, once in, there seems nothing more simple than to go on, adding, adding to one's long bills. I was very fond of dress then; I am now, and dress in India—to dress well—means plenty of money. I ran up long accounts recklessly. I had bills in Bombay, Calcutta, Poonah—that I scarcely dared think of—besides bills in London."

"I kept up a great number of servants, and a most costly establishment, for I was resolved that the lovely Mrs. Thorn should hold her own in society on other grounds besides mere looks. We gave dinners, we kept a kind of open house; we kept several horses, and a carriage, cows, ponies, and a host of retainers to look after these."

"So my monthly funds were soon swallowed up, and did not half make the two household ends meet. You will say that I was crazy and Robert insane, but Robert knew nothing of the expense of our establishment. He had always lived in a mess, and Robert was charmed to see his wife the most popular woman in the place, to hear that no one did things like Mrs. Thorn, no one gave such dinners, or dressed so well, and he asked for no more; least of all, did he ask to see the bills."

"Years went on—few on—and Robert, who never had much moral ballast, was led away by others, and took to gambling and racing, and, I'm sorry to add, to drink."

"I still kept on my career, still danced, and dressed, and rode, and lavished money—not mine—and was, I am afraid, a very reckless, unprincipled woman; but, indeed, indeed, never a wicked one. I had no children—and they are a tie—I had nothing to steady me, and Robert's misdoings were visited on me in a way."

"Ladies were shy of him, for they never were quite certain as to whether he would leave their tables sober or not. People began to ask me out suspiciously, often alone, and I went; but it is a bad, bad practice for a good-looking young married woman—it makes the world talk."

"I tried all I could to reform Robert, and he would reform for months at a time, and then break out worse than ever, but never on duty. He never got into scrapes in that way. He had had one or two awful money rows—I tremble now when I think of them—when Robert had been nearly beside himself with fury; but luckily, oh! luckily for me, his racing was successful, and I tided over some of my worst chasms with various cheques he had given me in the fulness of his triumph. Still there were other bills, and still I kept ordering new dresses. Dress was as much a madness with me as brandy was with Robert."

"During one of his long, lucid intervals he made acquaintance with Major Karalake. He set his collar bone after a hurdle race, and so their intimacy commenced, and when your husband came up to the hills he was our constant guest. I encouraged him as much as I could, for he had a good influence with Robert, and he was fond of racing, too—though not a plunger—on the turf. He rode one or two races for him, and won; he rode my horse, and won, and because he did this,

and, because he was wealthy, and good-looking, and popular, and the other women wanted to have his society themselves, they talked of him and me."

"If they had known the real truth, most of his time in our house was spent poring over Ruff's racing calendar with Robert. He never flirted with me or any woman, though most courteous and polite to all, and no one believed that he was a Benedict. He went away after his leave, and returned to Murrer—dying as we all thought. He was carried up the hill in a palanquin, and we believed it to be his last journey. I nursed him, and during the hours I sat beside him—when he lay tossing and raving in fever—I learnt all about you! He never said much, but a word here and there was enough; he was married, he adored his wife, but over and over again, he reacted a scene in some hall—a scene that seemed burnt into his brain."

"He got better, and by some stray word—some stray look—he found out that I knew. He never actually opened up the subject, but it was a kind of bond between us, and one day he put your photo in my hand, and little George's, but he said nothing. I think he trusted me, and I believe he liked me in a kind of brotherly, cousinly way. He was very, very good to me—to us. Robert had one of his fits on, and Major Karalake, who could scarcely move, came over often to our bungalow, and was kinder to me than any brother. I had talked foolishly in my rage, and shame, and passion of running away, but he argued with me, and calmed me down, and made me bear it."

"It is your duty to stay and reform him," he said, plainly. "You must put your shoulder to the wheel. You took him for better or worse, and must abide by him; besides, if you leave him, think of the scandal, the washing of all the family linen in public; not to speak of leaving him to go down the hill altogether, and he may be pulled up yet."

"He—your husband—came over and stayed with us, and was a true friend to Robert. I believe that he reformed him. I believe that Robert will never yield to his besetting temptation again. But our money affairs came to a crisis. Patience has limits. Some of my long accounts came in, and what with these and losses on the turf, and being rather shattered in health owing to his excesses, Robert was about to blow his brains out. Your husband was just in time, his last note was written, the revolver ready to his hand. Thanks to him, who generously lent us money, we got over that also. You will think very naturally what a dreadful couple we were for your poor invalid husband to have to manage, and so we were, but he has worked a reformation in us both. I wanted to see him alone about a bill he backed for Robert that has fallen due—an old affair—and if not renewed we will be ruined. We had forgotten this debt when we were reckoning up the others, but then, I am ashamed to say, we had so many!"

"Our affairs came to a grand climax just before your husband came home. Only for him we would never have pulled through. I blush to think of all the money he lent Robert, though he, on his side, says he owes us, or rather me, a debt—his life; but that is nonsense!"

"It seems too hard to think that after all he has done for us in every way, that the mere fact of mixing himself up in our unlucky affairs should destroy all his domestic happiness."

Here Mrs. Thorn paused after this long speech, and looked searchingly at me. I made no answer. I could not find utterance, and she went on,—

"Of course you are thinking, naturally enough, what horrible people we were; but I am painting myself in my worst colours. You will wonder why I came here. Well, I was so tired out with a life of worry, excitement, and fighting with Robert's weakness and my own tradespeople that I came home



for a rest. We have some money coming to us soon, and we mean to start afresh. All my fine gowns are not new, though but little worn. I have been trying to curb my extravagance, and when I go back Bob and I will make a fresh start, and, let us hope, a better one.

"We must save and save to pay off your husband and this dreadful bill he put his name to for Robert ages ago, and that we had quite—quite forgotten. If he had not paid it off, too, I do not know what would have happened. The soucar gave Bob a week's grace, and then said he would report him to the commander-in-chief, and that would mean ruin."

"It is owing to money matters and his great influence with Bob that Sir George and I have been so much thrown together. As to their being the remotest idea of flirtation between us—"

She paused, cast up her eyes, and shrugged her shoulders, leaving me to conclude her sentence as I pleased.

"Why," she proceeded, "if it came to that, I don't believe he could flirt if he tried. I never saw any one who was less a ladies' man. Miss Bellairs, the belle of the station, gave him no end of encouragement, but she might as well have been making eyes at the barrack-clock for all the return she met. I suppose, now, Lady Karslake, you think me a horrid, fast, vulgar woman?"

I became scarlet at this abrupt address, and for a moment or two did not know what to say.

"You have certainly not flattered yourself, Mrs. Thorn; but I don't quite think all that. You were very, very good to George when he was so ill. I shall never forget that, and I am certain that I can say the same for him."

"It is very sweet of you to say so, and not to call me an odious harpy who has preyed on his purse, and made him pay her debts. I am going away to-morrow, and I do not suppose that we shall ever meet again. I'm afraid you won't have a pleasant recollection of me. See how frank I am! But, think of me as you will, think well of your husband, for a truer, more loyal, chivalrous gentleman, in the very best sense of the word, never drew breath! Ah, here they come. I must say good-bye," she whispered, giving my hand a sudden squeeze as she rose and made room for Maggie.

I never saw her again, for she went away the following morning; but I heard a great deal of her, not merely said but hinted by Mrs. Sharp, who came not long afterwards to pay an afternoon visit to my mother, and to give me, indirectly, a piece of her mind on the subject of our late inmate.

I said nothing; I was still an invalid, and lay on the sofa, and was not expected to contribute much to the conversation. I merely said "Yes" and "No" or "indeed" and "really," and smiled incredulously as Mrs. Thorn was painted in *sepia* with a heavy brush by Mrs. Sharp, who seemed quite resolved to make me very jealous; and, when I did not fire up, as she expected, vaguely intimated that I had a weak mind and a poor spirit.

According to her Mrs. Thorn was an adventuress that sponged on wealthy young men, and lured many large sums into her own and her husband's pockets; but I showed very plainly that the topic had no interest for me.

I yawned widely behind my handkerchief, and I was so flagrantly inattentive that she was reluctantly obliged to change the topic, and to vivisection some other person's character.

(To be continued.)

It seems a great misfortune that body and mind, like man and wife, do not always agree to die together. It is bad when the mind survives the body; worse still when the body survives the mind; and worst of all when both survive health and hope.

## ONLY A WOMAN.

—o—

Only a woman! A delicate woman!  
Who starts at the sight of a mouse;  
Whose weight is four-score  
(Not many pounds more),  
And yet what a power in the house.

Calmly, serenely, she orders her household  
With almost a soldierly drill;  
From chaos she's bringing,  
Yet all the while singing,  
Sweet order, her part to fulfil.

Only a woman! A soft-hearted woman,  
Whose bright tears are ready to flow;  
And yet, whose small hand  
Is made to command  
In her womanly sphere here below.

Small things may try her and ruffle her temper,  
And yet with great trials she'll rise,  
And shame even man,  
With some well-devised plan  
That must have dropped down from the skies.

Only a woman! A far-sighted woman,  
Who strives to make men of her boys,  
Who reads their young hearts,  
The while she imparts  
True principles in with their joys.

Training her daughters—their constant companion—  
Soft-leading them each by the hand,  
Teaching them truths  
In their innocent youths,  
That their names may be gold in the land.

Only a woman! A beautiful woman,  
Now gliding through chamber and hall,  
Her laughter and song,  
That to home life belong,  
Robs many a heart of its thrall.

Joy of her children—queen of her husband—  
Who else may claim such a throne,  
Strong and enduring,  
Sweet peace insuring,  
Who but fair woman alone?

M. A. K.

## WANTED AN HEIRESS.

—o—

### CHAPTER XXXIV.—(continued).

SOME people shook their heads, and said that young Joscelyn was going to the dogs. Perhaps they were right. At any rate, the puppies, in the shape of idiotic young men, with round expressionless eyes and weak, foolish chins, accepted him as their model, and quoted him admiringly as a "davylish good fellow!"

His tenants saw him but rarely. He left business matters in the hands of his steward, and grumbled if he were ever called upon to take any active part in the management of the estate.

His original intention of living upon his property and developing into a model landlord had sadly deteriorated. Beyond reducing the exorbitant rents, building some cottages, and having Camoys Hall thoroughly renovated he had done little or nothing.

His schemes of improvement had been nipped in the bud. As a married man he could easily have been induced to take more interest in his property. As a bachelor he only regarded it as a means of raising money to meet his heavy expenses.

When he paid a flying visit to Camoys Hall, in company with two or three sporting friends, it was merely for the purpose of inspecting his racing stud. He did not care to entertain the local magnates or to discuss business matters with his tenants, who were invariably referred to the steward.

When once this became generally known his popularity waned. A non-resident landlord could expect nothing else, and yet the growing coolness of neighbours and tenants annoyed Joscelyn on the rare occasions when he gave them a chance of displaying it towards him.

How far he would have gone, if permitted, will never be known. A check was put upon his downward career by a serious illness, the result of hard drinking, heavy losses, and reckless living.

Outraged nature will bear a great deal; but sooner or later she rounds upon those who abuse her, and amply avenges herself as a proof that she is not to be trifled with.

At the close of a long, racketty season, strewn with incidents that had caused even the most lenient to think twice before inviting him once, Arthur Joscelyn had gone down to Camoys Hall, after giving an open invitation to a number of choice spirits to join him there in the course of a day or two.

"You're looking dreadfully ill, sir," remarked old Marjory, with the license born of long faithful servitude. "Perhaps country air and country quiet will set you up again."

"Ill! nonsense!" was the impatient reply. "I'm all right, Marjory. You'd better get in more help. I've invited a lot of gentlemen down here for the shooting. There's a man cook coming from town, and I've ordered no end of things to supplement your stores. I thought I'd come down in advance to prepare you for the invasion."

A man cook! Marjory's honest old heart was well-nigh broken. Words failed her when she sought to express her indignation. Sir Algernon had never found fault with her old-fashioned English dishes, but his nephew must needs displace her in favour of a man in a paper cap, who, doubtless, spoke a foreign lingo, and manufactured hateful foreign kickshaws!

Margery trembled with rage as she thought of such a man ruling the roast in her kitchen, where she had so long reigned supreme. Would she be able to keep her hands off him if he waxed insolent? The British constitution itself must be in danger when such things were permitted to occur.

But she need not have troubled herself. When the man cook arrived there was nothing for him to do, unless it could have been possible for him to stoop to such trivial requirements as beef-tea and barley-water. The master of the house was dangerously ill; the expected company had gone in some other direction, selfishly anxious to avoid infection, and Marjory had it all her own way.

"A bad case of typhoid fever," said the London physician, "and one likely to prove fatal. It had seized upon a frame weakened by excess, and little could be done by the patient to resist it. He had youth on his side, and that was certainly an advantage. He might recover, but it was extremely doubtful." Then, after giving some general directions to the local practitioner as to the treatment to be adopted, Galen returned to town, and Joscelyn commenced his painful struggle with grim death.

A fierce desire to see Ethel Dare once more took possession of the sick man. In an interval of consciousness he crawled a few words on a sheet of paper, and besought Amos Jordan to wire them to her without delay.

"If that won't bring her nothing will," he thought, despairingly, as he tossed to and fro on his pillow, repeating the message he had sent till delirium drove it from his mind, and the gardener had to be called in to assist in holding him down.

He was dying of thirst, and there, in front of him, stood Ethel holding a glass full of cold, clear, sparkling water. He stretched out his hand for it, and she dashed the glass to the ground with a pitiless laugh.

He was wading through an immense bog, sinking further into the black, oozy slime at each step that he took, vainly striving to reach Ethel, who glided along before him

lambent light encircling her like a will-o'-the-wisp, leading him on to certain destruction. He called to her, but she would not answer him, only, as the peat closed over his head, he heard that clear, mocking laugh again.

Through the horrible phantasmagoria, the visions of a disordered fancy, her image ran persistently. In the still watches of the night the Hall rang with her name, as he shouted it in the madness of delirium, and piteously entreated her to forgive him the sin of which he had been guilty towards her.

"Come to me at once if you do not fear infection. Ask your father to bring you. You will not refuse forgiveness to a dying man. I must see you again before I go. For the sake of our old love grant me this favour."

As Ethel Dare read the somewhat incoherent telegraphic message quoted above her dark eyes dilated like those of a startled, wounded deer, while a little unconscious moan burst from her lips.

Dying! Oh! how that word unbarred the floodgates, and let out the pent-up tide of love, sweeping before it all feelings of proud resentment and cherished anger.

To refuse forgiveness to a strong, healthy athletic being, likely to live for many years, had in her case been a difficult matter. In punishing him she, had doubly punished herself. With her the difficulty had lain not in forgiving, but in abstaining from uttering the words of pardon and reconciliation that would have brought him at once to her side, a penitent wooer.

Her heart had cried out for him, although pride and a deep sense of injury had steeled her against him.

What it had cost her to send his letter back unopened no human being beyond herself ever knew.

Now that he stood on the threshold dividing one world from another, likely at any moment to take the final step, how could she ignore that appeal for a final interview, an assurance of pardon from her own lips? She neither could nor would ignore it, she told herself wildly; she would go to him at once. Let him be what he might, in other respects he was her love, and she had punished him as cruelly for his sin as if she had been altogether without sin herself.

Infection!—for her the word contained no element of fear. Were he to die—what would her life be worth without him? While he lived there was always the vague, undefined hope of a future reconciliation to cheer the dreary present. But dead! Oh, sunless skies and barren earth, would it not be a far happier fate to perish with him?

The Rector was from home visiting some of his widely-scattered parishioners.

Putting on her garden-hat, Ethel ran swiftly across the fields to Mr. Brune's.

Archie Joscelyn had never ceased to love her. In that fact lay the secret of her own tenacious affection, that even wounded pride could not uproot. His poverty and not his will had led him to propose to Gwendoline Massey. His heart had always remained secure in Ethel's keeping, and, knowing this, his shortcomings appeared less heinous in her eyes.

Mrs. Brune, her splendid white hair unarranged under a Marie Stuart cap of pearl and velvet, was unpacking a small box just received from town, when Ethel entered the little dining-room at the Nest.

"I saw you coming across the fields, child," said the old lady, without looking up.

"What do you think of my new tea service?—tom-tits and apple blossoms in sage green on an ivory ground. Is it not delightfully æsthetic? Why, bless me! what is the matter?"

She had glanced from the engrossing china to Ethel. Unable to reply, the girl placed the telegram in her hand.

"That young man is fated to disturb your peace of mind, my dear," observed Mrs. Brune after reading it. "Just as you were learning to forget him this must come. Now, don't

let it alarm you needlessly. A man always thinks he is going to die if his little finger aches."

"Mrs. Brune, I shall never forget him," murmured Ethel. "If I were to try all my life I could not do it. He must be very ill, or he would not have ventured to send for me."

"And they have foolishly omitted to say what complaint he is suffering from," commented Mrs. Brune. "Something infectious, that may mean anything, from measles to small-pox. My dear, what are you going to do?"

"I must go to him," rejoined Ethel. "If he were to die, I should never pardon myself. I am partly to blame for the wild, irregular life he has been leading of late. I prevented him from marrying Miss Massey, while I refused to marry him myself. He is weak, and, knowing this, I ought to have dealt less harshly with him, my poor Archie!"

"You have little cause for self-reproach, child," said the old lady, "so don't torture yourself about your conduct in the past. You could hardly have acted otherwise. Now, this is opportune! Here comes the Rector to pay me a visit. I wonder how he will receive your news, Ethel?"

"Say all you can in favour of my going!" pleaded the girl. "Dear Mrs. Brune, don't you think I really ought to go to him at once?"

Looking at the pale young face and the dark circles under the brilliant eyes Mrs. Brune replied,—

"Yes, I think perhaps you had better go, if only for your own sake, Ethel. For the young man himself I cannot feel much pity."

The Rector, shocked and surprised, on hearing of Joscelyn's dangerous illness, made few objections to the proposed journey. Ethel had evidently set her heart on going, and it was not a time to withhold forgiveness even from one who had injured them so deeply. He dreaded infection less on his own account than Ethel's, and since she was willing to risk it he would not forbid her going, or refuse to accompany her.

Mrs. Brune helped them to get off, and the father and daughter started once more upon a journey, the object in this case, though sad, being infinitely less unpleasant than the former one.

Dead or alive? How would they find him? The question passed through Ethel's mind a thousand times as they were whirled along towards their destination. Flying fields, hedgerows, towns, villages, stations, she saw them as if in a dream, while a wordless prayer went up from her aching heart that Archie Joscelyn might be spared to her.

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

As the carriage that had been sent to meet Ethel and her father drove up the wide avenue leading to the Hall, the strange, unforeseen circumstances that had been instrumental in bringing her to the house she had once resolved never to enter could not fail to make a profound impression upon her.

Vows, plans, resolutions—how easily an event sweeping down upon us from some unexpected quarter can set them all aside?

"How is your master?" inquired the Rector of Amos Jordan, when the latter was helping him off with his overcoat.

"Very bad, sir, quite unconscious," said Amos, sorrowfully, stealing a side glance at Ethel as he spoke. "He keeps calling out for the young lady, and vowing we haven't sent to tell her of his illness. Perhaps when he has seen her he'll grow a bit calmer."

"I will go to Mr. Joscelyn at once," said Ethel. "I am not tired, and I don't require any refreshment, thank you."

"I beg pardon, miss," continued Amos, deprecatingly, "but the doctor said I was to warn you of its being a bad case of typhoid, and that the danger to yourself would be double if you went straight to Mr. Joscelyn's room on

arriving without taking any food after a long, fatiguing journey. Them was my orders, and I'm bound to obey 'em."

"You are quite right, my man," assented the Rector. "Ethel, I cannot allow you to run any unnecessary risk. You must eat something, and drink a glass of wine before going upstairs."

"Luncheon's laid out all ready in the dining room, sir," said Amos, leading the way to that apartment. "I'll bring up the hot dishes directly. We're all gle-handled just at present, the footman having gone away to bury his father; but I expect him back to-morrow or next day."

He spoke as if Jeames had gone away spade in hand to fulfil that pious duty, using a common and a very incorrect term, mournfully suggestive in a house over which even then hung the shadow of death.

Consenting for once to be guided by others, Ethel ate a few delicate slices out from the breast of a fowl, and drank a glass of sherry. Then, compassionating her anxiety, her father, without stopping to fully satisfy his own healthy appetite, rose from the table and accompanied her upstairs.

Lying in a darkened room, faintly scented with aromatic vinegar and disinfectants, thin and haggard, tossing and turning in feverish unrest, Arthur Joscelyn was a pitiful wreck, even for loving eyes to contemplate.

As Ethel softly approached the bedside he murmured her name, but failed to recognise her. She stood beside him, her cool hand laid upon his burning brow, while he called frantically upon her, reproaching her plaintively for refusing to come to him, or to speak one word of forgiveness.

"Oh, papa, this is terrible," she whispered, her eyes full of unshed tears; "if he only knew me."

"He's been like this for days, miss," said the hired nurse stolidly. "He was conscious for a little while when he sent for you. Then he went right off again, and he hasn't spoken a sensible word since."

Bending down till her mouth was on a level with his ear Ethel uttered the sick man's name,—

"Archie!"

The clear, distinct voice recalled his wandering mind from the dreary region of distorted fancies into which it had strayed. A more sensible expression overshadowed his face, and his fever-bright eyes gazed wistfully into hers.

"Ethel!"

"Yes, dear, I am with you. You were asking for me just now. Papa is here also. We started immediately after receiving the telegram."

He hardly comprehended her words, but he knew that she had forgiven him far enough to grant his request, and he strove to lift her hand to his lips in grateful acknowledgment.

"You won't leave me?" he said, feebly. "I can't live without you, Ethel."

"I will stay till you get better," she replied, kneeling down beside him, and smoothing the damp hair from his forehead, "Oh, Archie, for my sake, try to recover."

"You are not angry with me any longer?" he said, inquiringly.

"No! oh, no!"

"If I live will you consent to forget the past and give me another trial?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

"I have something to tell you, but my head feels so confused. I can't distinguish fact from fancy. Ethel, in the event of my death Camoys Hall will be yours. I have left it to you as an earnest of the reality of my love for you. Heaven knows I have given you cause enough to doubt it!"

Had he told her that he had bequeathed to her a volume of sermons, a canary bird, or any other trifle, she could hardly have shown less interest. His estate to her was a matter of secondary importance at any time. Now that he was at death's door she did not bestow a single thought upon it.

"I shall never doubt you again!" she said



n a low, earnest tone. "For the future perfect confidence shall exist between us, and we will be all in all to each other, Archie."

The momentary gleam of reason vanished, leaving the poor mind darker than ever. Joscelynn's life hung in the balance, and more than ever it seemed on the point of kicking the beam. Delirious nights and days succeeded that brief interlude of consciousness. Ethel seldom left him save to snatch a little rest, or to take the daily airing upon which the doctor insisted. Her presence had a soothing effect upon him, even in his wildest moments, and her name was constantly on his lips.

At length the crisis arrived. A few hours would decide whether Joscelynn was to struggle back to life and health, or to drift calmly away upon a voyage to the unknown shores of eternity.

Ethel never forgot that night. The minutest event connected with it was indelibly photographed upon her memory.

The patient slept through the long still hours, profoundly unconscious of the approaching change. Marjory and the nurse sat on one side of the bed, conversing now and then in awed whispers; Ethel, rigid, silent, tearless, sat half-hidden by the drooping curtain on the other.

The Rector kept the doctor company downstairs in the dining-room. One or the other stole in at intervals to inspect the patient, and Ethel watched their faces hungrily on these occasions lest they should have detected any change unperceived by her.

The clock ticked softly, the light breeze laden with the fragrance of autumn flowers stole in through the open window, tremulous gleams of silvery moonlight flecked the floor of the room, and still Joscelynn slept. Did this long unbroken rest betoken recovery, or the near approach of sleep's twin-brother, Death? No one knew. They had done their utmost, and they could only await the result.

Unable to bear the sickening suspense Ethel sank on her knees by the bedside, and hid her pale, anguished face in her hands. Even then he might be drifting from her without a farewell word, and there was no life-buoy that she could throw to him to prevent the tide from bearing him away.

Dear as he was to her how could she ever have behaved so vindictively towards him, she wondered vaguely, oblivious of his faults, and mindful only of her own.

Even her love for him had been tinged with self, she reflected sadly. Passionate, imperious, exacting, it had frequently tormented while it delighted him. Then how quickly it had changed into vindictive hate and a desire for speedy revenge on learning the deceit he had practised upon her! Both love and hate had been of the earth earthy. She had not striven to discipline her nature, or to restrain erring impulses. Self-will and inclination had been her guides, and they had failed to give her peace.

For the future, if he lived, she would act very differently. Her love should be made to assume a purer form. The imperious, wilful element in her nature should be curbed and controlled, and rendered subject to the higher powers. If he lived, but—

A hand was laid gently upon her bowed head. Believing it to belong to her father she looked up. A great throb of joy shot through her as she did so. The hand, thin, and white, and wasted, was that of Joscelynn. Wide awake and conscious he was regarding her in weak, restful silence.

The other watchers had fallen into a doze. Ethel alone had prayed and wrestled for his life.

"Don't worry yourself about me, child," he said, faintly. "I fancy that I shall pull through. I have had a long sleep!"

"You have slept for more than twelve hours," she replied, with bated breath. "You must not say any more at present, the doctor absolutely forbids talking. Archie, I think that Heaven is going to spare you to me."

"I hope so," he said, reverently, "I have much to atone for. Ethel, kiss me, and promise that, if I recover, you will become my wife. Nothing shall ever come between us again."

She complied with both requests. Then, with her hand fast locked in his, he fell asleep again, just as the glory of the newly-risen sun flooded the quiet room, dispelling the haunting shadows of the night.

A *Te Deum* went up from her grateful heart as she watched him breathing easily, his worn handsome face expressive of profound peace and rest after the long, doubtful struggle.

The nurse and Marjory awoke, and Ethel communicated the glad news to them in whispers. They summoned the doctor, who declared his patient to have taken a turn for the better, and to be on the high road to recovery.

Then, and not till then, Ethel broke down and wept freely. The tears relieved her overwrought brain and sorely tried nerves, and her father wisely made no attempt to check them.

When he urged her to go to her own room and get some rest she complied with a willing submission that surprised him. Those long suspenseful hours had borne good fruit already, and were destined to bear yet more in years to come.

Slowly but surely Arthur Joscelynn recovered. The Rector, anxious to get back to his duties, now that the young man was out of all danger, hastened his departure, somewhat to the regret of the newly-reconciled lovers.

Before they parted, however, it was arranged that Arthur, when sufficiently convalescent, should pay a visit to Combe-Appleton. He expressed a desire to be married there, and pleaded his cause with an eloquence that even the Rector was not proof against.

"We neither of us wish for any ceremony," he argued, "and if you will only consent to our union, sir, and cement it yourself, I shall be very grateful."

"Before entrusting my child to you I must feel certain that you know your own mind, and are not likely to make shipwrecks of her happiness a second time," said the Rector, severely. "Next to death marriage is the most serious thing in existence, and your past conduct has hardly been of a kind to promote unlimited confidence."

"I am aware of that," said Joscelynn, humbly, "and if it did not sound hypocritical, I should say that I deeply regretted the past, and all connected with it. I know that in coming here at my request you have conceded a great deal. In return, I can only assure you of my unaltered love for Ethel, which I am anxious to prove by making her my wife with as little delay as possible. Nevertheless, if you insist upon a time of probation I will agree to it."

(To be continued.)

FORGIVENESS.—Nothing is more moving to man than the spectacle of reconciliation; our weaknesses are thus indemnified and are not too costly, being the price we pay for the hour of forgiveness; and the archangel, who has never felt anger, has reason to envy the man who subdues it. When thou forgivest, the man who has pierced thy heart stands to thee in the relation of the sea-worm that perforates the shell of the mussel, which straightway closes the wound with a pearl.

THE EARL OF CRAWFORD, the distinguished astronomer, better known by his earlier title of Lord Lindsay, has called attention to the extraordinary deviation of the plumb-line which is manifested on the island of Mauritius, and suggests that great additions to our knowledge of the density of the earth might result from further scientific observations of that remote and highly isolated spot.

## HAD WE NEVER LOVED SO BLINDLY.

—O—

### CHAPTER XXV.

SIR BASIL FANE flushed with shame as he thought of all his broken resolutions. They were gone as if they had never been framed and planned after long meditation with himself—the fruit of sleepless nights and solitary days spent in arguing against every wish of his heart.

His strong will had triumphed over his passion, and he had gone about for days a saddened man, incapable of enjoyment. Laughter had jarred on his nerves; the sound of music grew hateful to him, the society of women became irksome, and all because he had told himself that he was bound in honour to give up the hope of ever having Flora Trevanion for his wife.

And now, in one moment of excitement, all the barriers which he had been raising with firm, but unwilling, hands were broken down, and all the work of the last few days was undone.

He had gone too far to go back. His pulses bounded as he told himself that now he was obliged by every dictate of chivalry to go further still. He had passed the rubicon when he was mad enough to hold her in his arms, and to kiss her pure, sweet lips.

If he called himself a man of honour and a gentleman he must—whatever had gone before, and whatever might be coming after—he must give her the option of becoming his wife.

As he looked down on her, lying on the sofa where he had placed her, lying there like a broken flower, her sweet face pillowed on his arm, all the tenderness of his nature, long pent up behind the iron walls of self-denial, went out to her in a wave of intense emotion.

Her youth, her innocence, her purity appealed to him irresistibly. He loved her, not because she had a skin like a pale bluish rose, eyes that seemed to wile the heart out of one's breast, lips that seemed framed for kisses, and soft brown hair like dark brown silk, forming a trap for sunbeams, but because of her guileless nature, her utter unselfishness, her generous, warm-hearted ways, her devotion to her brother.

As he thought of all this his stern face softened wondrously; the hard lines seemed to melt away, and he looked for a brief space as he had looked—young, and happy, and careless—till Sir Lucius brought a curse upon his life.

It would not do to hurry her. He would wait with what patience he could command. She did not love him yet, but she should before long, unless women were different, or he himself was changed since a few years ago.

Rivers, thank Heaven, was out of the way, and might be absent for years.

A young man's fancy is easily altered by a change of scene and a change of faces, and the chances were ten to one that before he was six months in India, or, perhaps, six weeks, he would have fallen head over ears in love with one of the few belles at his station.

Young men change, he thought, with calm contempt for the youth he had left behind him; whilst at thirty "girls may come and girls may go," but a man's heart is fixed for ever.

For ever! He felt it in every fibre of his heart; it would last through change and chance, through the shadows of sorrow and the sunlight of joy; it would go with him wherever he went, only increasing and gathering strength as the years went on, till he came to the end of struggles and hopes, till his passions were stilled by the chill of the grave.

Flora opened her eyes and looked full into his face wonderingly. As she met his glowing gaze her own fell, and she raised herself up hastily.

"Why am I not with Eustace?"

"Because you are not made of iron, and

"at first the good news upset you," trying to speak calmly.

"Then it wasn't a dream—the doctors have been here?"

"And decided that the operation can be avoided."

She clasped her hands, and the tears ran down her cheeks.

"Tell me what they said."

"They said he was very weak, which we knew as well as they did. His strength must be kept up in every possible way, and the quieter he was the better."

"I suppose if it were quietly done it wouldn't hurt him to bring him to the fire?"

"The worst thing possible. If you want him to lose his leg that's the best way to insure it," speaking almost sternly.

Flora shivered.

"But he can't stay here for ever."

"Not for ever. Why should you want to hurry him away? There is every reason against it. This house, as I've told you so often, is bigger than the Firs, and therefore better for an invalid. It is Mrs. Madden's delight to cook up messes for the 'poor dear young gentleman,' as she calls him, which the housekeeper at the Firs would not have time to do, and Trevanion, as he says himself, likes to be in a house where there are a few men about, instead of always being surrounded by petticoats."

"And I'm of no account?" raising her eyebrows.

"You are here, or else I could not keep him," with a smile. "But I see that I shall have to find some more powerful magnet than your brother, or else you'll be off."

"You couldn't. Even if I bored you to death, so long as Eustace is ill, I should have to cling to him."

"You are careful not to flatter me," with a slight bitterness in his tone, and a larger portion still in his heart.

"You wouldn't believe me if I did. But now I must go to him."

"Will you believe me that I am almost as glad as you are about to-day?" going towards the door to open it.

"I know you are kindness itself," her lips trembling, "and no brother could have been more good to Eustace."

"But I am a brother—you forget."

"Oh, yes. Brother and friend—I think it must have been a special providence that sent you to this place."

"I know it was," and then it flashed across him that there was another way of looking at it, and he muttered to himself, as he looked after her slight figure vanishing down the corridor, "or else a temptation of the devil."

Instead of following her he turned into the hall, where his eye fell on Frank Rivers' card, with the word "Good-bye" scrawled across it.

Mr. Rivers left that for Miss Trevanion, Sir Basil, said the butler, who happened to be standing close by, inspecting a number of coats which were hanging on a row of pegs against the wall, "and he was very particular that it should be given into the lady's own hands. Would you like to give it, sir, or shall I?"

"You may, but don't disturb Miss Trevanion just at present. She is with her brother."

Then Sir Basil passed on to the drawing-room, which was in general use, not a state-room simply to be used when there was a reception.

There he found his aunt, as he had expected, for she always sat there when she came in from her drive. A five o'clock tea-table stood close beside her chair, but most of the cups had been used, and the cake and bread and butter were nearly exhausted.

He sat down, and stretched out his hand as if to take hold of the handle of the teapot, but this scandalised Mrs. Fane, and she took possession of it instead, saying, with a smile,—

"Allow me the pleasure."

He watched her pour out his tea in silence

—then he refused to eat anything, and after asking her how she enjoyed her drive, whether the roads were dusty, etc., etc., began the speech which he had been thinking over for the last ten minutes.

"You and Greylands suits you very well, doesn't it?"

"Admirably. I don't know when I ever felt better—my strength surprises me. I can drive without fatigue, and entertain your guests after my poor fashion," with a deprecating smile, "without suffering from a sleepless night."

"Delighted to hear it, because then you won't be hurrying away."

There was a pause which tried Sir Basil's patience. He did not care for his aunt, whom he considered artificial and insincere; but he was rabidly anxious for her to stay with him, as, if she went away, Flora Trevanion would go at the same time. Perhaps this was the reason why Mr. Philip Fane suggested to his mother that it would be better to move on, and not wear out a welcome.

Mrs. Fane was in a difficulty. She liked her present quarters immensely. To all intents and purposes, that is to say—pleasant purposes—she was mistress of a large establishment, without any expense to her own pocket. The *cuisine* was good, the stables were well filled, and there was always a carriage at her disposal. She felt rich, as if she had a large balance at her banker's; and the feeling without doubt is very pleasant, especially when it does not involve the drawbacks of a crowd of hangers-on, and an endless correspondence.

And as soon as she left Greylands she knew she would begin to be pinched, and doubtful how much she could afford. And yet she could not bear to offend Philip, who evidently had a strong reason for wishing her to go. What it was she could not imagine, for he rarely confided to her anything that she was not likely to find out. Perhaps the mystery was more effective than an honest explanation, for she was afraid of committing some fearful mistake, if she acted against his wishes, whilst being kept in the dark.

"Well I don't know as to that," she answered, with a slight hesitation in her tone. "Philip has only reminded me this morning that I must not drop all my friends."

"I don't see why you should drop them because you happen to be staying at Greylands. Is it such a disreputable place, that they are sure to cast you off?"

"Well, dear Basil, how can you be so ridiculous? I gain in importance by having the Abbey as my address. But you see I have so many engagements for the autumn, and I don't think it will do to throw them all over."

"Can't they be put off?"

"No, that would never do. You see I am a lonely widow whom nobody cares much about, so I must take my chance, and go when I'm invited."

"I should only go when I wanted to. Give up your visits for once, and make Greylands your home for the present."

"I only wish I could," in all sincerity, inwardly resolving that she would coax Philip to consent; "but you see if I gave up my visits, my friends would give me up as well. It is always so easy to be forgotten," with a melancholy smile.

"I wish it were. The bores of the present generation would be non-placed. Now consent to stay till the middle of September?"

"Impossible, I'm afraid," with a sigh, as she longed after the fishpots of Egypt, "but I will see what Philip thinks about it."

"You are your own mistress. No need to consult any one but yourself; Philip is sure to be here for the shooting."

"That's very different; but believe me, whether I go or stay, I am equally grateful for your hospitality."

"Not at all," and he rose from his seat with a cloud on his face, for he foresaw what Philip would say.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"No, mother, I know Basil better than you do. A stiff fellow made of buckram, who would ask you to stay out of politeness, and then call Heaven and earth to witness behind your back that you stuck to him like a limpet," and Philip having enunciated this opinion leant his back against the marble mantelpiece, put his hands in his pocket, and whistled a tune under his breath.

"But he wanted me to stay, really. He was so earnest about it that I could scarcely refuse. As it was, I said I would ask you, simply as a way out of it."

"Glad to hear it. I am doing some good down here, at any rate. Say that you must go in a week's time."

"Say a fortnight Philip," she pleaded earnestly.

"A week's too long; you must not stay one day beyond. I have my reasons, and one day you will thank me. In that day, mother, you will come to Greylands as much as you like, but not on Basil's invitation."

"What do you mean?" opening her eyes in languid surprise. She did not care much about that day far in the distance, but she did care much about the fortnight out of which she meant to wheedle him. To the other world there might seem no reason why she shouldn't rebel, and stay on at Greylands till Sir Basil married, and his bride ousted her out of her comfortable position; but Philip had got his mother into excellent training, and it was rarely indeed that she ever crossed his will. She would make a show of resistance, but she never had the courage to keep it up. When she had gone a little distance a sudden terror would come over her, and she would turn back in a violent hurry with fluttering nerves.

"What I mean will be patent to you some day, and require no explanation. By staying on here you may ruin my prospects, and indirectly injure yourself. Now do exactly as you like."

"What is the good of telling me that," rustily, as she took up a newspaper. "Do I want to ruin my son, or to injure myself? though what you mean by either I can't imagine."

"If I were you I should write to Lady Frognore, and fix the day. There's nothing like having a settled date to fall back upon."

"I don't know if Lady Frognore will expect me."

"She must, when you say you are coming. Come mother, you have done very well without Greylands all these years. I don't see why it should become a necessity to you. If Basil hadn't been the most selfish dog that ever existed, he might have lent it to you and me for the last five years."

"But he scarcely knew anything of me," recollecting the time when Sir Basil was the poorer of the two, and scarcely ever received an invitation to his uncle's house in Connaught-square.

"He knew you were his aunt, at least by marriage, and that ought to have been enough for him; but, as I said before, he is selfish to the core, and only notices you when he wants to make use of you."

There was not a more selfish man than Philip Fane in the world, and his cousin was one of the least; and yet he really thought he was speaking the truth, because Sir Basil did not give him his whole fortune as a present. He paid his debts, but had not bought his gratitude, for a man's nature generally hates its benefactor. And the more Sir Basil did for his cousin, the less he seemed to admire him. Even now, when living under his roof, Philip was ready to league himself with the lowest scoundrel of the earth in order to be able to do him an ill-turn, and for the sake of satisfying his greed of wealth he would deprive him, if he could, of the chance of marrying.

In spite of Sir Basil's solemn assertion that he meant to remain a bachelor, Philip was



certain that, unless some lucky chance prevented it, he would marry Flora Trevanion; and as he intended her for his own bride, and nobody else's, this was rather aggravating.

First, she must be made to leave Greylands, so as to put a stop to the dangerous interviews in the octagon-room, at which he had no chance of interfering; and then, when she was back at the Firs, the field would be open for him as for his cousin. If the worst came to the worst he would play his last card, and face the storm that would ensue. But this could be only a *dernier resort*, and meanwhile the baronet, with his insidious and pitiless friendship, was making way.

As Mrs. Fane bowed to her guests, and said she must depart, Flora, rather against her will, for she could not bear to see herself away from Eustace, came to the conclusion that she could not stay in a house where there was no other lady to keep her in company.

It was the day before she was going away that Sir Basil came into the octagon-room, where she was sitting with her husband, and asked to speak to her alone.

"Don't be long," said Eustace, as she rose from her chair, with a heightened colour.

"I shall be back directly," she said, with a nod and a smile, then followed Sir Basil to the octagon-room.

"Don't look frightened. For me I had news for you, only I've kept back something that Sir Cavendish Brown told me, and I think it is time to tell it. He said—looking down into her eager, upturned face, breathing with anxiety—"that he thought there was some chance of a cure—understand me, a permanent cure—if a certain operation could be performed. He could not undertake it except in London."

"But how could he go there?" her face falling.

"Easily enough. Trust him to me, and he and I will take possession of the family mansion in Eaton-square. Mrs. Madden shall go with us, and he shall have every care. Now what difficulty are you going to make?"

"You are too kind—I don't know how to thank you," her face flushing, her eyes full of tears. "But—but—Mr. Willoughby told me an operation cost such a heap of money, and we have nothing. Of course I'd starve, or go out as a governess, rather than let anything stand in Eustace's way; but even if I did, and saved up all my salary, it would be years before it grew to hundreds."

"Do you think I'd allow it? Child, what do you think I am made of? Didn't you promise that I should be your brother? If the word means anything prove it now. Give Eustace to me for a few weeks. Don't ask any questions, don't trouble your little head about ways and means, only give me my way, and before a month is out I return him cured, and then you shall thank me if you will."

"Thank you! I will bless you till the last day of my life," her sweet face all aglow, her lips trembling. "But if ever we come into our own again, as Eustace says, you will let us repay you, won't you?"

"You shall repay me long before then, but there shall never be a question of pounds, shillings and pence between us," taking her hands in his. "What shall I do without you to-morrow, and the day after, and the day after that?"

"Your other friends will see a little more of you, that's all. But do you mean that Eustace will ever be really well—quite like other people?" scarcely able to credit the good news.

"I hope so, but it will take time, and you must not be impatient. Will you ever think of me instead of him?" the old jealousy in his heart.

"Not instead," with a smile. "I've two brothers now, and I think of them both."

"Didn't you say once that you would love anyone who cured Eustace?" watching her expression with anxious, eager eyes.

"Yes"—a smile rippling over her face—

"but that would be awkward for Lady Fane."

He started, not seeing at first what she meant, but afterwards he smiled.

"There is no Lady Fane?"

"No, or she might object to your being my brother. Oh, Sir Basil, when you come back I shall worship the ground you tread on!"

He hid the rapture in his face by stooping to kiss her hands.

She caught them away with a shy blush.

"Brothers don't do that sort of thing."

"No, I fancy they do something more," looking at her with mischievous eyes. "I only lacked the courage, not the will."

"Sir Basil!" and she jumped up from her seat with crimson cheeks.

"It was you who suggested it."

"I didn't. But don't let us talk nonsense when we've got so much to think of. When shall you start?"

"As soon as Mr. Willoughby gives us permission."

"Oh, what will he say? I had forgotten him."

"He will have no right to stand in his ward's way."

"But—but," looking down on the ground, "he will think I have no pride if I accept such an obligation."

"He would understand that there could never be a question of obligation between you and me."

"What will the world say?"

"If they know anything about it, they will envy Basil Fane."

She looked up at him with startled eyes.

"Why?"

"I'll leave you to guess," with a low bow. And whether she guessed or no she went back with a fluttering heart to her brother.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

"Porsy, you've bewitched the catch of the county," remarked Mr. Willoughby, as he came back from a visit to the Abbey.

Flora had returned to the Firs, and was trying to settle down into the quiet ways of old; but she felt as if there were a change in everything. Mrs. Willoughby treated her with more consideration, Emily with more animosity, Jane with more friendliness. The reason for all this she could not guess, although Mrs. Willoughby would have thought her decidedly wanting in intelligence.

"You are talking nonsense," with a smile, as she came and sat close by her guardian's armchair; "and I am dying to know what has been settled. You haven't said 'no'?"

"No, I haven't said it, because I'm not a fool, and, as Fane says, I have no right to stand in the boy's light; but I don't like it. If it hadn't been for the girls I'd rather have taken it out of my own pocket."

"Oh, gaardy! how good you are!" giving his arm an affectionate squeeze. "It does not matter so very much, because we are certain to be able to pay it back some day."

"You will pay it back I know, child, and it is that which worries me. That Philip Fane has an odd way of talking of his cousin."

"Never mind him, he's a horrid man. Sir Basil pays his debts over and over again, but he repays him with the basest ingratitude."

"The way of the world. Caress a cur and he'll bite, kick him and he'll sink away. But Sir Basil isn't a cur by any means. Caress him, and he'll give it back with interest; eh, Flo?"

"He is the kindest man that ever lived," turning away to hide the roses in her cheeks. "But why do you look so grave? Are you keeping anything back?"

"This operation is a serious business, and I don't know how the boy's strength will stand it. I can't say I like his going away with a comparative stranger."

"Oh! couldn't I go?" clasping her hands. "If I'm not there I shall fancy they are killing him."

"Sir Basil does not fancy going without you. He says Eustace will want you so desperately."

"Couldn't I have a lodging close by—so close that I could go to him every day?"

"Impossible! I couldn't leave my office whilst Steadman's away, and nothing would induce my wife. Child, there is only one way, and Sir Basil will tell it you to-morrow."

"Where?" eagerly.

"Here, but in your own sitting-room. I don't know what is best, but I do know that I shall feel horribly dull without my Popsy."

"But it won't be for long, and I shall come back so happy," laying her cheek against his. "It won't be the same child, and the Abbey isn't the Firs. Now go away; I must look over these papers, and I can't get you out of my thoughts so long as you are sitting there."

She gave him a kiss and went away, thinking over what he had said about Eustace. A grave risk! Oh! what if it were better never to take it! If—if anything happened would she ever forgive herself?

"You never saw Frank?" asked Emily, as they met on the stairs. "He came here, and then we sent him on to the Abbey."

"No; it was the day the doctors came. I've got his card with his last good-bye, but I don't suppose he will be away for very long."

"Ten years, very likely," with a grave little nod.

"Ten years!" turning pale. "Poor fellow!"

Then she went upstairs, and pulling out the card which she kept in her work-basket, looked sadly at the awkward scrawled address it. When and how would they meet again?

The next day there were stirrings and subdued titter in the house, and the two girls kept watching Flora Trevanion as if she was the interesting heroine of a drama. She was dressed in her usual simple cotton, with a Gloire de Dijon close under her chin, and stared when Mrs. Willoughby suggested that she had better put on her cashmere.

"But why? What is going to happen?"

"I thought you knew Sir Basil was coming," with unusual solemnity.

"Yes; but he won't think about my dress."

"Very well, my dear; perhaps you know best."

And she turned into the drawing-room, whilst Flora ran to her little den, where she could think out this dreadful problem about Eustace.

She must be with him; of that she was quite certain. It would send her mad to know he was undergoing all sorts of dreadful things in London. Whilst she was far away Sir Basil would think of a way; her guardian had said so.

Presently she went out into the garden, and picked some roses, which she brought back and laid upon the table whilst she emptied the vases.

She was standing up, with a rose in her hand, when there was a knock at the door, and Sir Basil came in.

After they had shaken hands he looked round the small room with interest, taking in every detail, from the picture of Mrs. Trevanion on the wall to the shabby Schiller lying amongst the roses.

"So this is where your life is spent when you are not with him?"

"Yes; it's a dear little room, isn't it?"

"I don't see much to admire," raising his eyebrows, "except a few family treasures, which I'm glad to see are movable."

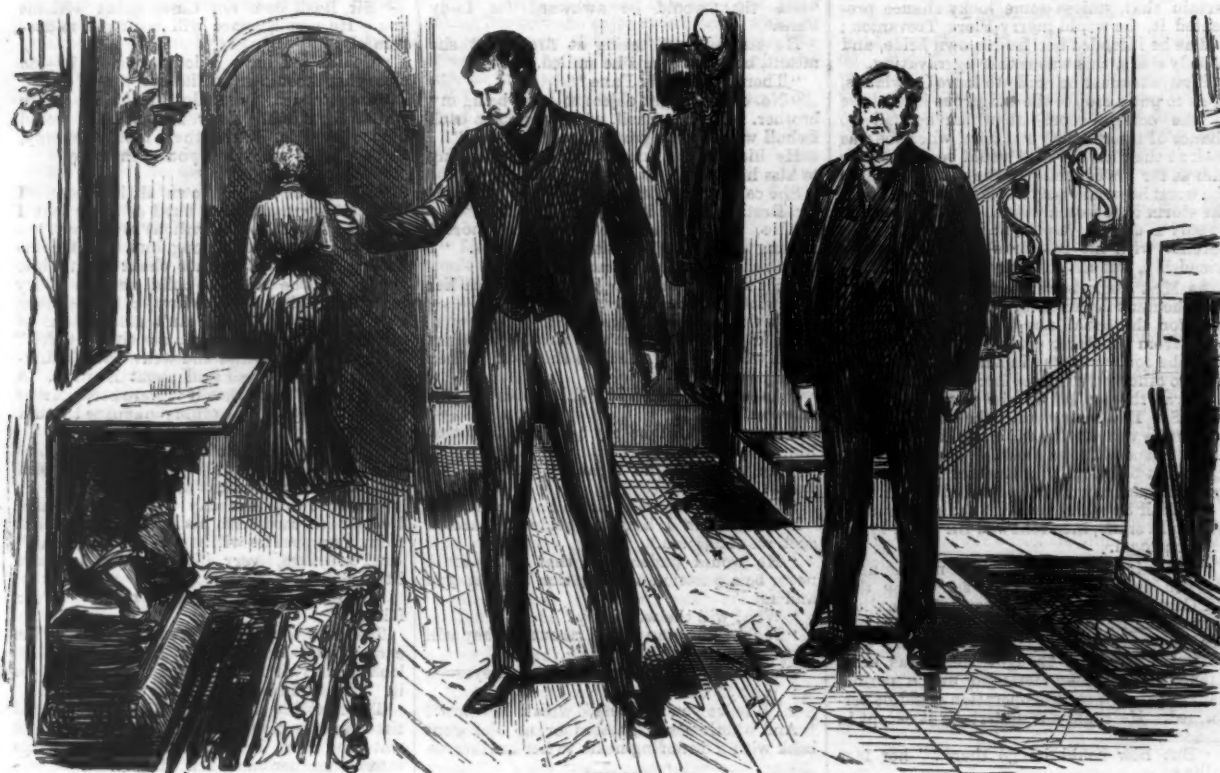
Flora wondered why he cared whether they were fixtures or not.

"Sit down on this; it's Eustace's chair."

"Thanks, I prefer this sofa, as I want you to come and sit by my side. I've got something to say to you."

She sat down, her heart in a flutter, and he took his place beside her, but seemed in no hurry to speak, so she began, with precipitation,—

"Have you decided anything more about Eustace?"



["MR. RIVERS LEFT THAT FOR MISS TREVANION, SIR BASIL," SAID THE BUTLER.]

"We are waiting for you," turning round and facing her. "There is a risk. I don't deny it, though Cavendish Brown's so confident. Eustace is wild to have it tried. He says life is worthless to him at the present rate, and I can quite understand it."

"Yes, I know it," large tears welling in her eyes.

"It's so hard for a man. Every day of my life I've wished and wished that we could change places."

"I'm very glad you can't. I believe you would sacrifice every hope in life for the sake of that boy."

"And so I ought. You can't understand how I always feel that I ought to make up for his being lame; at least, as far as I can."

"I think I do. You don't like the thought of being away from him whilst this is being done?"

"No; if it is possible I must be there," clasping her hands tight together. "I should go mad if I were kept down here."

"You shall come, dear!" leaning his arm on the back of the sofa, and letting his eyes rest on her lovely, troubled face.

"Mr. Willoughby said you would tell me a way," looking up at him, hopefully, for he had never failed her.

"Don't you know what it is?" his voice growing husky, a flush rising to his temples. She shook her head.

"You must come as my wife!"

"Oh! no, no," shrinking back in dismay.

"You told me—"

"I told you what?"

"You told me that I was to be your sister."

"I said so, but it couldn't be. A man of stone might have managed it."

She covered her face with her hands, her poor brain in a whirl. She had felt so safe with him lately, so free and unconstrained, because he was a brother, not a lover; and now the lover was in the foreground, and the brother nowhere. She owed him everything, even that precious life which now it was so

hard to risk. She might owe him in the future Eustace's return to health and strength. Could anything be too much to do for him? Hadn't she once promised that she would do everything he asked? Her heart was so overflowing with gratitude, why did it turn so cold now? She must love him. She had often said he was the best friend that she ever knew. Why should Frank's blue eyes seem to be looking into hers reproachfully? He was only a boy; he would soon forget her; he had never even said that he loved her.

"Answer me," almost harshly, as his voice quivered with strong emotion. "Good Heaven! have I made a mistake? Don't you love me? Say 'yes' or 'no,' for Heaven's sake," as he tried to take her hands away; "I can't wait."

"I do love you, indeed I do!" as if appealing against a voice within.

He put his arm slowly round her, and drew her towards him.

"Give yourself to me, darling, and you shall never forget it."

Could she say "no" with Eustace's fate hanging in the balance? And what could she want more? Here was the noblest man she knew ready to help and to guard her through life; and she had felt so lonely before. She felt as if being pulled two ways at once. Then Sir Basil's voice in keenest reproach smote upon her heart.

"Child, do you hesitate still?"

And the next minute her small head dropped on his shoulder, and the next his eager lips met hers. With that long passionate kiss her fate was sealed, and she had placed herself for weal or woe in Sir Basil's hands. He did not say much, but he held her close against his throbbing heart, and felt as if it must burst with joy.

His life for five or six long years had known no peace—no happiness. But now to his eager eyes it looked like a blaze of sunlight, with all the gloom cast far behind. Ah! would Heaven only grant that after the day of

sorrow there should be light in the evening-tide!—for her sake not for his.

Sir Basil received the congratulations of the Willoughbys, and then went back to tell Eustace that he had won his sister. The boy shook his hand nearly off, and said "it was the jolliest lark out"; and when it came to Mrs. Madden ears, she pulled out her handkerchief and cried for joy. One person swore under his breath, but contented himself outwardly with a sneer.

"I knew you would do it, so why did you try to make a fool of me?"

After dinner Mr. Philip Fane took out a cigar, and said he was going for a stroll. His stroll took him beyond the park gates, and as far as the Firs, where he pulled the bell, and asked in a hoarse voice for Miss Trevanion. As the lamp-light fell upon his cold, keen face, it was white with passion.

(To be continued.)

THE knowledge which we crave and work for, which we look for and find, which we think or dig out for ourselves, which we rejoice in as a newly-found treasure—that is the knowledge, be it small or great, that is worth having. It is like the food for which we hunger—it gives us fresh power and fuller life. It matters far less even what this knowledge is than the way in which it was gained. The most systematic and well prepared course of study worried through by a student whose only care is that he may get his diploma is of far less value to him or to the world than the vital thought of the young mechanic, who, anxious to master the secrets of his trade, patiently studies its details, discovers its principles, and infuses into it his own fresh and living force, perhaps in the form of some new invention, or perhaps in a more skilful touch or a more delicate finish than it has yet received.





["SO MUCH DIFFERENCE, MISS ASHTON?" QUERIED THE ARTIST.]

## NOVELLETTE.

## NAN'S FAITH.

SHE was sitting on the topmost bar of the little rustic stile, gently swaying her body to and fro as she contemplated with her large blue eyes the broad expanse of heaving ocean stretching away far ahead of her.

Above her the sun was slowly descending in the heavens, leaving behind him great trails of crimson and gold; while, now and then, a snowy seagull wheeled into sight and made its presence known by its own peculiar cry. Save for the latter no other signs of life were near.

In front of the girl lay the restless ocean, behind her stretched far back the grassy cliff, now radiant in its summer robe of crimson and purple heath.

For it was the month of July, and the evenings were warm.

She had taken off her large shady hat, with its fanciful wreathing of Nature's flowers, and the fresh sea-breeze fanned her fair cheeks where the roses and lilies struggled for the predominance, and gently lifted the glossy, raven-hued ringlets from her brow.

Suddenly she stopped swinging herself, glanced quickly behind her, then once again faced the ocean, while she exclaimed, giving meanwhile an emphatic kick to the bar, upon which she now rested her small, well-shod feet,—

"How tiresome! George need not have been so late. The beauty of the sunshine will have vanished before we get there!"

And the cherry lips were rendered still more charming by the pout which puckered them.

"I am sorry" began a voice proceeding from behind her.

The girl tossed her head pettishly, and, without giving the other time to finish his sentence, interrupted with,—

"Now, please do not attempt that terribly deprecating meek kind of tone that you think

necessary to employ towards my paternal relative when he is slightly irate. You are late, sir, and it is no good bandying words respecting the circumstances. Only you might have come earlier; it has been lovely sitting here!"

The girl's voice softened somewhat, and there was a ring of weariness in it, touching to listen to.

"I am sorry," broke in the voice from behind once more, as the girl ceased.

But again she interrupted without turning her head in the direction from whence came the excusing tones.

"Oh, George, do be quiet! Say nothing, but wait there patiently till I have watched this seagull out of sight beyond the next headland. I wish I could fly like he does! There—almost gone! Not quite! And now, sir, what do you mean by being so dreadfully and fearfully late? Have you and Lucy been entertaining each other to such an extent as to totally forget my existence and your promise? Now, don't answer, sir, till I get down from this exalted position, and then I can the better judge of what truth there will be in your confession and excuse."

The girl jumped lightly down from her late resting-place, picked up her hat, which had been whirled away a few yards by the evening breeze, replaced it carefully on her raven locks; and then, still without turning her face to the newcomer waiting so patiently at the other side of the stile, she continued, in quick, imperious tones, and with a mock-serious expression upon her lovely face,—

"Now, sir, I ask you what excuses you have for being so late and thus keeping me waiting such an unconscionable time? I am going to condescend to face you at last, and, remember, the truth, sir!" As she concluded she slowly turned and confronted—a stranger!

Yes; there, hat in one hand and up-turned ferns in the other, he stood. A man, good-looking decidedly, and of an age somewhere about thirty.

And she?

She stood there, silent and abashed, in all the full glory of her young beauty—a maiden of *petite* figure, with large, deep blue eyes, now cast upon the ground.

Silence fell while she pondered and puzzled over what words should next be hers in which she might excuse herself to this stranger for having thus kept him waiting, while she amused herself by lecturing (as she supposed) the absent George.

While he also remained speechless, lost in silent admiration at the display of beauty before him, as he took in with rapid artist-glance the rounded outline of the small figure and the set of the dainty head.

The sun sank still lower, and the sky became still more radiant in its robe of crimson and gold.

A sea-gull wheeled round from the distant headland and came slowly flying towards the spot where the two stood silent.

The man was the first to break the silence; facing towards the advancing bird he exclaimed, in soft, mellow tones,—

"See! There is your friend returning. Please, am I to wait till it is out of sight?"

The speech was delivered with such mock gravity that the ridiculousness of the scene stirred the keen sense of the ridiculous in the girl's composition.

Raising her large blue eyes skywards she burst into a merry peal of laughter, which lasted till the gull had again disappeared.

Then, timidly bestowing a hasty look at her companion, she said, in low tones,—

"You must think me very rude for having treated you so, but, really, I—"

"Don't trouble to apologise, miss—"

Here he remembered he knew not the surname of the pretty girl standing before him on the other side of the stile, so hesitated, and waited for her to supply the missing link.

"I am simply Nan Ashton," replied the girl, but she proudly drew herself up, 'as

though there were much dignity involved in bearing that name.

Her companion bowed gravely and respectfully.

"Then, Miss Ashton, pray do not apologise for having detained me these few seconds while you were absorbed in watching the flight of the gull. I have had my reward in the beautiful scene before me."

"Ah! I am glad you think it beautiful!" came the answer, as the girl faced round again towards the leafless trees and bold, brown headlands.

Her companion could not but smile at her utter ignorance of the intended compliment to her own beauty.

Another brief spell of silence, while each gazed on his and her own particular object.

Then Nan suddenly exclaimed—

"But I am going, or the others will wonder where I am. It was very wrong of George to keep me waiting so long, and I must go and lecture him."

"In your old me just now, Miss Ashton?"

"Ah, don't remind me again of my rudeness, please! I feel quite penitent enough already. But tell me one thing—how was it that I did not see you on my way up here? The cliffs are all so open that it would be difficult for anyone to say and conceal their immediate presence."

"Quite so, but you see I am something of a botanist, and so I went about what one may say to get those, Miss Ashton."

He held up the ferns he carried in his hand.

"What nice ones!" she exclaimed.

"Where did you find them?"

"At the bottom of some of the hollows scattered about here. Such nice sheltered nooks for ferns."

"And you are an artist?"

"Yes, I can lay claim to being able to do a little with the brush, Miss Ashton."

"Ah, how nice! I wish I could. I have already imagined two subjects for painting, but have not the talent or ability to transmit them to canvas."

"May I ask the subjects?"

"I am almost afraid to tell you, for you may think them so ridiculous."

"I promise not to do so."

"Really?"

"Really."

"I think I can trust you, so I will begin."

Nan Ashton hesitated, after bestowing another glance upon the tall stranger not many paces from her.

Hesitated, as she met the deep-set brown eyes fastened upon her.

Hesitated, and gathered a sprig of heather from off a neighbouring green bank.

"I can be trusted, I assure you," broke in her companion, smiling pleasantly and contentedly at the slender, white fingers toying with the heather.

The girl looked up with flushed face, and said, nervously, as she drew the sprig through her fingers, and showered the tiny pink blossoms at her feet—

"No, I cannot! You are only a stranger to me, and I do not even know your name. I cannot, and I must be going."

She advanced to the stile as she spoke.

"Allow me!" said her companion.

The white fingers lay passively in the broad palm outstretched to her; one spring, and she had gained the other side.

"I wish you good-evening," she murmured, shyly, without glancing up.

"Good-bye, Miss Ashton. But before you go allow me to introduce myself, as I hope we may meet again ere long. I am Allen Lester, and am considered an artist by my friends, and flatterers; therefore if, at some future time, you should care to entrust the subjects of your pictures to me, I shall be more than honoured with your confidence, and will do my best to execute them faithfully."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Lester."

A bend of the dainty head, responded to by a respectful bow on his part, and then the

girl disappeared along the narrow pathway upon the heather-carpeted cliffs.

A quarter of an hour's brisk walking brought her to another stile, similar to the one she had previously crossed.

"I wish he were here to help me!" she murmured, while a crimson flush overspread her countenance, and a sweet smile gathered round her mouth. "And now for going!" she murmured again, as she gained the other side of the stone stile; and then her step grew slower, the smile faded away, and was replaced by a grave and thoughtful look as she pursued her way down Howland's lane.

On a hill, till—

"Nan!" cried a young voice, faintly.

The girl raised her head, and glancing to the right discovered that she was no longer alone.

"Oh! Nan, I am so sorry," broke in another voice, so faintly one.

Nan bowed her head slightly, and replied, coldly—

"Oh! it doesn't matter, I can assure you, George."

But she saw, you were to have met me at the second stile, and there we were to have strolled together the sunset from the Rigg. Was that it? I nearly forgot."

George Holman glanced keenly at his betrothed before he made answer.

Meanwhile the first voice continued Nan, and in the same timid manner.

"I am very sorry, Nan, dear; but you must not scold George, altogether. I asked him to get me some roots of the sea-thill, and he promised on condition that I should accompany him, and take them home. You are not angry, Nan, dear?"

The speaker continued, as she drew nearer, and looked up at her large blue eyes, as though to read in them favourable or unfavourable signs.

"Angry? You silly child, Lucy. Why, I am not even vexed! I sat on the stile for some time, and enjoyed the scenery, and then—then I came back again."

Nan's speech ended rather lamely, for a glimpse of Allen Lester's form and face flashed before her, and caused her to grow confused, and she engaged to the man with the clear grey eyes, who was now so intently bent upon uprooting a fine specimen of the sea-plant her cousin Lucy so desired.

Nan feared a cross-examination by those same honest, grey eyes, so turned away slightly, simply asking as she did so—

"Will you people soon have finished your botanising, because if not I think I shall go down to the crystal cave and gather some ferns? We want some fresh ones in the drawing-room."

"Don't go, Nan, please," called out the young man, as he rose from his stooping position, triumphantly holding aloft his prize, but very red in the face from his exertions.

Nan said nothing, but almost stopped in her walk, and blushed softly to herself.

A few minutes later and the young man came up with her, hastily wiping with his handkerchief the earth from off his hands.

"Where is Lucy?" asked Nan.

"Gone home, of course. That was the condition that I got the plants for her that she would carry them home herself. Now, Nan, where shall we go?"

"I think I shall go home too. Papa may be returned from Newtown, and if so, of course he will expect me to be in waiting to perform any little service, or to listen patiently while he recounts any little circumstance that has taken place since he bade me farewell this morning."

"Captain Ashton cannot possibly return till between nine and ten this evening, and it is not much more than a quarter-past eight now; so there is no occasion for you to go in yet, and I do want to talk to you. Where shall we go?"

"I don't care."

"Nan, I believe you are vexed with me, though you would not confess it before Lucy. I am sorry, dear, that I forgot how the time

was slipping by. Of course, I started to come to you, and then I met Lucy, and—"

"There, say no more about the matter! I am not feeling the slight in the least, and Lucy is gone home radiant with her basketful of sea-pinks, and so we are all contented, George. If you have anything really important to tell me we can go to the 'parlour,' George. The sea will look grand from there."

"Yes, Nan."

Ten minutes more of scrambling down the side of the grassy cliff and the two arrived at a wide ledge, designated by Nan and her cousin the "parlour."

Nan bent over and looked down at the spray-dashed rocks beneath.

The sea had quite disappeared now, and the sky in the west was tinged with orange.

"Nan," called her lover, "come and sit here and listen to what I have to tell you, dear!"

The girl started, as though her thoughts had been wandering; then, with one hungry and wistful glance at the brown rocks beneath, turned and seated herself on the grassy slope.

"Nan, what has happened to you since this morning?"

"Nothing, George, except that I have dined, partaken of tea, and been for a walk," replied the girl, mischievously and carelessly.

"Nan, dear, don't jest, for tell me what has changed you?" pleaded her lover, while he bent his honest grey eyes full upon her.

She turned crimson, her face and neck stretching gaze, but still replied as before—

"I assure you, George, nothing has happened more important than the things I have already enumerated, and I mean placed innocent of being changed in any way, but we are the same. No; my hat is on the right way. Tell me, George, the heather is so faint, is it not?"

"Nan, why will you thus tease me, dear? I will ask you no further for any explanation, still I am convinced that you are not the same Nan that played tennis with me this morning."

"What have you to tell me, George?" the girl asked, impatiently.

"Put your hand in mine, Nan—so; and now listen. I received a letter from my uncle this morning, and he has heard from his people in Canton that all is not quite right over there with regard to the business; and they advise him to at once send some trustworthy person over to look into things a little; and, Nan, don't grieve too much, dear, but my uncle has decided that I shall go."

"You, George?"

The start, the gasp (was it of relief?) were pleasing to the young man, who unsuspectingly took them as proofs of her love and sorrow at his departure.

"Yes, dear, I am to be sent," he quietly replied, but he drew closer to him the girl he loved so deeply, and with his disengaged hand stroked gently the little white fingers lying so passively in his grasp.

His companion said nothing, but her face paled, and a thoughtful and abstract look came into the large blue eyes as they fixed themselves steadily on the glowing horizon.

"Nan, dear, you will write often?"

"Yes, George."

But still the abstract look.

George Holman sighed softly as he noted the same, for again the idea that something had occurred to ruffle his love during the past few hours reverted to his mind.

"Nan, dear, say that you are sorry, say that you will miss me a little when I am far away. I shall miss you, my darling, and long hourly for the time when I shall be once more at your side. Oh! Nan, Nan!"

The manly voice quavered, the grey eyes grew misty, while the clasp on the slender, white fingers grew firmer and more passionate.

"George, I am sorry; but, still, you know, we can write to each other from time to time, and, I daresay, the time will not seem so very long. You will be busy, and I shall go in for Sunday-school teaching, and I think—yes, I really think—I will try my hand at painting. I wonder where my paints are. Let us go



home now, George; I expect papa will soon be returning."

She tried as she spoke to disengage herself from the encircling arm of her lover, but in vain.

"Nan, I can't let you go till I have felt your sweet lips pressed closely against me!"

She yielded to him, but still with the same quiet, set expression on her beautiful face.

Kisses—not one, but half-a-dozen—were rained in quick succession upon her mobile lips—mobile after the one claimed.

Then George Holman released her, and, assisting her to rise, set his face homewards.

The rest of the way was pursued in comparative silence, only broken occasionally by a few remarks respecting the various objects passed on the way.

When the small gate was reached leading up the gravel walk towards the pretty villa occupied by Captain Ashton, George Holman opened it, and, extending his hand, said, simply,—

"Good-night, Nan!"

"You will come in, George, and see how Lucy has arranged her sea-pinks?"

"No to-night, thank you. I am not much interested in flowers, and I must write to uncle to-night. The ship sails this day week, Nan. Good-night, dear!"

Before the girl had time to make any remark upon this last observation he was gone, and she was left standing alone.

As the sound of his firm-treading footsteps died away in the distance she leaned her head on the topmost bar of the small gate, and murmured, softly,—

"I wish I had told him, but I could not; and he loving me so well. If it had only been Lucy!"

And then other footsteps were heard approaching. Nan drew herself up, and prepared to go within; but as she crossed the lawn fronting the house she turned.

A tall figure, carrying itself well, had just passed the gate—a man's figure, tall and upright.

A hot flood of crimson swept over the girl's face as in the gathering twilight she recognised again the stranger of that evening's walk.

Later on that night, as Nan stood in her white dressing-gown, brushing out her raven-hued tresses before the glass, her cousin Lucy entered, and stealing softly to her side put up her face to be kissed.

Nan stooped and laid her hot lips against the cool cheek presented to her.

"How you startled me, Lucy! I thought everyone was asleep but myself."

"I have been in bed some time, Nan, but I could not sleep."

"How was that? Have you been puzzling over sea-pinks, dear?"

A slight tinge of pink crept into Lucy Arden's pale cheeks as she replied,—

"Not that exactly, Nan; but—I was thinking of you and—George, dear."

Nan hastily shook together all her tresses, and then turned and faced her cousin.

Tears were in the latter's eyes Nan noted; so she bent down and kissed once again the cool cheek.

"Lucy," she whispered, "I can't talk it over to-night, but leave me now. I know and you know that George sails this day week. I must be alone to think which is best to be done; so leave me, dear. To-morrow, perhaps, we will talk more of this. Good-night!"

One more kiss and Lucy Arden returned to her room.

"Little simpleton! She loves another girl's lover, and yet has not the common decency to hide it from that girl!" muttered Nan, as she closed the door upon her cousin and returned to the soothing task of arranging her luxuriant tresses.

Half-an-hour later and she lay tossing to and fro on her pillow, wet with tears as she struggled with her heart—a heart that had that day gone astray from its lawful objects.

Poor Nan!

Her seventeen summers had not fully ripened her maiden heart; and to George Holman had been given—and accepted readily by him—the weak and almost girlish affection which is so totally different for the real love and passion a woman's heart is capable of.

So she was not to be blamed too harshly that summer night, as she tossed wearily upon her couch with aching head and throbbing pulse, even though her thoughts were of another than good-hearted, loving George Holman!

"What! back again, Lester?"

"Behold me, Dick, and judge for yourself."

"It is the voice of my old friend and fellow-artist, but still I misdoubt me. How about the wonderful things to be achieved when Allen Lester should be surrounded by the superfluous Cornish scenery? Answer me as to that; but tell me not of talent that has achieved all—brown sea-weedy rocks, lichen-covered boulders, bold headlands and restless, heaving ocean in such an incredibly short space of time as has intervened since the fifteenth! No, no, Allen Lester; other fairies must have been at work and spirited you back amongst us once again at such short notice."

"Dick, old fellow, cease your jesting, I pray you."

"Allen?" questioned the other, vaguely; but the mute query was understood by the one to whom addressed.

The brown eyes gained a hard look, while, with a heavy and weary sigh, Allen Lester sank back into an easy-chair and passed his hand dejectedly across his manly brow. His companion was silent, and continued to puff away at his cigar, without pretending to notice his friend.

For Dick Morton knew only too well what ailed his old chum; knew also that now was not the time to speak of what had happened. So the one sat and smoked while the other conked and struggled with his grief—what ever it might be.

And the summer sun shot its golden rays into the small studio and lit up the half-finished picture resting on the easel. Touched with its burnished light the sweet face looking forth from the canvas in its half-finished stage.

The designer of the same "sweet face," glancing that way between his puffs at his partially-consumed weed, and noting in one of these searching glances some slight imperfections anent the colouring and form of the laughing mouth, rose, laid down his cigar, and advancing to the easel took up a brush and proceeded to make the alteration he deemed necessary—so absorbed did he become in his criticism of his work as to grow totally oblivious of any presence save his own.

"That is more the expression, I think!" he murmured to himself, as he drew back a few paces and surveyed critically the altered feature.

It pleased him vastly to note how well and truly rendered was the spirit of laughter that one was tempted for an instant to imagine the whole a reality. The eyes—large and blue, too—were faithfully rendered, and told well of the imaginary sauciness and daring their owner was capable of, and also of the love!

The sun continued to irradiate the whole with his all-powerful rays, and Dick Morton remained completely absorbed in his work of criticising and admiring the effect produced by his own exertions.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed a voice at his elbow, startling him so as to cause him to let fall his wet brush upon the floor.

"Lester! How you startled me! What is the matter? You don't look yourself at all. Have some brandy, old fellow, and rest on that sofa a bit. Heat's been too much for you in this room, I expect."

"Thanks, Dick; a little brandy will do me good. Don't take any notice of me, bat go on with your work. I can't tell you yet. You understand?"

"Perfectly, Allen," replied Dick Morton, as he bustled about, opening cupboards, and producing bottles and glasses.

"Now, help yourself, Allen, and then lie down a while on my sofa. I must go out for an hour or so; but you won't mind being left, will you?—and then when I return, you will feel better, and, perhaps, will like to tell me all about it."

"Dick, you are a true friend!" replied Allen Lester, as he laid his hand affectionately on his friend's shoulder, and bent his brown eyes upon the man regarding him so anxiously.

"We have known each other some time now, Allen," was all the response the other made, and then, having seen his visitor fairly settled upon the small couch, Dick took up his hat and stick, and went forth into the July sunshine, smoking as he went.

"Poor Allen! How he and I shall ever regret the day when first we planned to go to Branscombe! He for the sorrow it has since brought him, and I that he suffers so! A wasted life, in one sense. Poor Allen!"

Three or four hours later and the two artist-friends were again together in Dick Morton's cosy little studio.

Each held in his hand a chance cigar, and both were puffing forth dense clouds of fragrant smoke.

Allen Lester had quite recovered himself, and was lounging luxuriously in the easiest chair the room possessed; while opposite to him sat his friend and host.

"Dick, what did you think had happened when you saw me walk, unannounced, into your studio this afternoon without one word of warning?"

"I really do not know well what I did think, Allen. I was quite certain I was awfully glad to see you, old fellow, and as for you, how or why you came, I never gave such a matter a thought. I knew that you would tell me all that was necessary for me to know, if there were anything to be told."

"Dick, you are good to me! What should I do without such a friend as you?" queried Allen Lester, earnestly, as he glanced across at his friend, nearly enshrouded in tobacco-smoke.

"Listen to me, Allen," answered the latter. "Who was it that first suggested Branscombe as a delightful spot for sketching? Think of the answer to that question, and then you will cease to marvel at my showing so much interest in your affairs. Cease to marvel, in a measure; but, of course, there are other reasons for my so doing. *Cela va sans dire, mon ami.*"

"Dick, let me tell the story over again, just as it all happened. Will you listen?"

"Fire away, old fellow, and I am yours."

"It is five years ago now, Dick, that you and I agreed to take a tour together. Of course sketching was to be our amusement, and, consequently, we had to decide upon some spot where scenery was the particular attraction. I suggested several well-known places, and you—"

"Suggested Branscombe," moodily broke in Allen Lester's listener.

"And you suggested several as well. Finally, after a week's consideration, we decided upon going to Branscombe. We had two good reasons for this decision. Firstly, Branscombe was a nice, quiet little place, containing some of Devonshire's most romantic scenery; and, secondly, provisions were cheap there. Five years ago now! My uncle was alive then, and I had but a slender allowance from him, and you were not the famous painter you are now, so these facts prove the pith of the second reason. So to Branscombe we went, and found the place all that an artist's soul could desire. The next morning you did not feel quite the thing, so I—"

"Don't go on, Allen. It is too much for you, I can see," again interrupted his friend.

"Dick, you promised to listen; therefore

shall continue. You could not accompany me on the first explore, so I went alone, taking with me all the necessities for several hours' sketching. I wandered for some distance; then pitched my easel at a little space from a most picturesque but sadly dilapidated cottage, situated on the extreme end of the cliff, and I worked away manfully. The sun beat down in all its strength, and at length my picture was finished. Then I remembered you—how lonely you must be; so, hastily collecting my traps, I prepared to retrace my steps. But first I must ask for a draught of water from the occupants of the cottage. No sooner thought of than done. Ah, Dick, that was the act that did all the mischief! My knock was heard, and the door opened by—"

Here Allen Lester paused, re-lit his cigar, which had gone out during the narrative, and then continued,—

"By a girl as beautiful as a Hebe. Describe her now as she then was, I can't. For have I not since seen all that beauty marred by passion in its worst form? But to me then she was perfect, and I straightway fell captive to her charms. The water she brought to me in a common ware mug tasted as nectar when drank in her presence. Our first interview was brief; but I contrived that many another should follow. She must sit to me, and as I drew her perfect form and features I learnt the more to idolise the same. She told me her history. She was half-Spanish, half-Portuguese; had been saved when the vessel, in which were she and her mother, had been dashed to pieces at the foot of the very cliff upon which stood her present home. The good people there had taken her in, and cared for her ever since that terrible night. I listened, still more entranced; and then I asked her to become my wife—to leave her kind protectors, and come away with me to a large city, where she would see grander sights, and wear finer clothes than she had ever been acquainted with heretofore. So she consented. I can say no more, Dick; you must finish."

Allen Lester covered his face with his hands, while his whole frame shook for a few moments.

"Allen, Allen!" pleaded his friend, "why will you try yourself so by recalling back all that is past?"

"Finish the story," conceded the other. "You were married to Inez Carey at the small village church, and I was best man upon the occasion. Then you took your bride away; and I heard no more of you till that dark, rainy November night when you suddenly appeared before me here in this my studio, and told me of what had happened. Your beautiful wife had left you for another's house, and you were heartbroken. Since that night we have never, by mutual consent, mentioned her name between us, and why should we now?"

"Because I dreamt last night that she sent for me. I was obliged to return here, Dick, to ascertain if my dream were a reality. Thank Heaven! it is not so."

"And now, old fellow, I think we will say good-night to each other. Yes; you are my guest, and you must submit," said Dick Morton, as he rose, and opened the door, and motioned his friend towards it, saying meanwhile, "Go to bed, Allen; and go to sleep, and dream no more horrible things."

This was his further advice as he ushered his guest into the snug, little room always kept for his use.

When left alone Allen Lester turned to the comfortable lounging-chair by the window, and, sinking into it, gave himself up to deep and painful recollections.

Suddenly his eye was caught by his portmanteau placed not far off.

On the top of the same lay the daily paper which he had purchased to beguile the time with on his journey up that morning.

"I don't remember much of to-day's news," he murmured, as he rose, and fetched the paper from its resting-place.

Then reseating himself, and opening wide its columns, he commenced to skim the various items of news.

Up the first column on his right hand, then down—half-way down—the second; and the paper dropped from his fingers, and descended rustling to the floor.

"Inez Carey dead! Heaven be thanked! And now I am free again! I must tell Dick, and at once."

But the exertion of rising following the reaction was too much for Allen Lester, and he found it so. With a burst of glad tears he threw himself, all dressed as he was, upon the bed, and sobbed there tears of gratitude and joy.

Gratitude for, and joy at, what?

The death of Inez Carey! The death of the girl who had brought dishonour and misery upon him in the past!

And now she was gone from him for ever! Gone to that land from which none can ever return to trouble or comfort those they leave behind!

And with this last thought Allen Lester calmed himself, and composed himself to sleep. Once during the night-hours that ensued he half-awoke from his couch, and clenching his fists, murmured in tones of suppressed passion,—

"Dick, she has dishonoured me and robbed me of life itself, and now I hate her, and wish her dead!"

Then fell back again, and slept peacefully till another July morn was announced with its sweet fresh air and golden sunshine.

Ah, judge him not! Man is but human!

Back again in Cornwall.

Nan Ashton and her father had just started off for an expedition across the cliffs. The latter was well provided with hammer, chisel, and other necessities for fossilising, while Nan carried a basket for the reception of the specimens.

"Glorious view this, Nan?" remarked the Captain, as he stopped on the very brow of the cliff, and let his gaze wander, now eastward, now westward.

"Splendid!" replied the girl, as she drew in a long breath of the deliciously fresh sea-air.

Such sea-air, such unalloyed ozone, as can only be met with on the Cornish coasts. And then the two were silent as each regarded the beautiful expanse of scenery stretching so far ahead.

Nan's thoughts would recur to the stranger artist, met casually that July evening, and of whom she had seen or heard nothing further. And then came the thought that she was engaged to George Holman.

Why should she connect the two facts?

Why was it that when she thought of the one some fact connected with the other should also present itself?

She did not yet confess the truth to herself, but went struggling doubtfully on. A heavy sigh escaped her unawares as she arrived at this point—a sigh which did not pass unnoticed by Captain Ashton.

"George will soon return, Nan?"

"Yes, papa."

"So don't grieve too much, my dear, but keep up a brave heart. Get plenty to occupy your mind, and then time will not seem half so long."

"Yes, papa," the girl again replied, mechanically as it seemed, while a strange, far-off look dwelt in her large blue eyes.

"Partings are always sad things, and much to be avoided," continued the Captain, as he turned away and once more resumed his way.

Nan stayed yet a moment longer in the same place to give vent to another sigh— heavier than its predecessor—and also to wipe away the large tear-drops that had gathered and were now rolling down her face.

Only for a moment, and then she was herself again.

"See, papa! my favourite gulls!" she exclaimed, as a number of those pretty sea-birds

came in sight, wheeling in and out among the big brown rocks beneath the steep cliffs. "Pretty creatures! I wish I could paint them just as they now are," Nan added, as she watched the snowy-breasted gulls in their gyrations.

"Some one else has the same wish, evidently, Nan," replied her father, pointing at the same time with his stick to a small ledge a few yards down the cliff ahead of them.

Nan looked, and clearly made out the figure of a man seated before an easel.

"Who can it be, papa?"

"Some artist, my dear."

"Yes, I know, papa; but—but I am afraid I asked rather a silly question, considering the number of artists that visit Sandport every summer."

"Just so. I think I will go down and see what the fellow is sketching, and whether he possesses much talent of the brush. You stay there a moment, Nan, and look after the things."

Captain Ashton threw down hammer and chisel at Nan's feet, and then began to make his way, by a narrow sloping path, down to the ledge where was seated the artist, while Nan threw herself down on the bright crimson heather and fixed her gaze seaward.

Again she thought of her absent lover, and again the form of Allen Lester would make itself present.

"I wish I could forget him," she murmured.

"It seems so wicked to have let George go away trusting me still, and believing that he has my love, when all the time I know so well that I—"

"Nan, Nan!"

It was her father's voice calling her.

"Coming," she replied, in clear tones as she rose slowly and made her way to the brow of the cliffs.

And then?

Then her whole frame received a shock, and thrilled with the same as her eyes glanced downward and rested on the form and face of Allen Lester. He saw her directly, and was at her side in an instant.

Raising his hat respectfully with the one hand he extended the other, and then, without any hesitation, but with a glad smile and bright rosy blush, put her small fingers forth, and let them rest passively in the clasp of the stranger-artist.

"Nan, my dear," broke in the Captain's voice from below, "this is Allen Lester, the son of my old friend, and nephew of Squire Burrows of Elton Hall."

"To the late Squire, Captain Ashton," corrected Allen Lester, in a grave tone, as he turned and led Nan to the spot where stood her father.

"Dead?"

"Yes, I am grieved to say."

"How long since?"

"Some three years."

"Ah! Not such an old man as myself!" sighed the Captain, as he turned to look at the half-finished sketch resting on the easel, while Nan, glancing up at Allen Lester, met his gaze full upon her, and found it necessary to again flush rosy-red, and to put forth some matter-of-fact observation.

"How I wish I could sketch, Mr. Lester!"

"Your old desire, Miss Ashton; and not yet fulfilled."

"And, I am afraid, never will be, Mr. Lester," laughingly replied Nan, as she drew nearer, and contemplated the picture yet in a crude state.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, and started back.

"What is the matter, Nan?" asked her father.

"Nothing, papa!—at least, not much."

"Do you like my subject, Miss Ashton?" asked Allen Lester.

"Very much; it is so much like—like one I have always flitting through my brain," replied Nan, as she folded her little hands, and continued to gaze with thoughtful expression upon the picture.

"Like the one you would not describe to me



the first time I had the pleasure of seeing you, Miss Ashton, only a week ago."

"Eh! What is that? You have not met my daughter before, Lester?"

"Yes, Captain Ashton. I had that pleasure just a week ago to day."

"Where, then? And why did you not tell me of this, Nan?"

The girl opened her lips to answer, but became so confused, as she met Allen Lester's brown orbs fixed upon her, that she was obliged to desist.

"I was out for a stroll, and so also was Miss Ashton, and we met accidentally at a small stile further on; and, as Miss Ashton was seated with her face turned from me, it became necessary that I should ask her to allow me to cross. That is the truth, I believe, Miss Ashton?"

"Yes," Nan murmured. But her blushes came and went, as the recollection of the early part of the interview returned vividly to her.

"Well, well; that is all right, I daresay. Adieu! Lester. I must tell you that I shall always be very pleased to welcome you at Laurel Lodge. Nan will give you some tea every evening that you like to look in. We must not interrupt your work any longer now, but, remember, we shall expect to see something of you very soon—eh, Nan?"

"Yes, of course, we shall always be glad to see Mr. Lester, especially as he is such a clever artist," responded Nan, resting another glance from her charming blue eyes upon Allen Lester.

"Is that to be my sole recommendation, Miss Ashton?" questioned the latter, earnestly, as he glanced down at the girl.

Nan blushed, then murmured,—

"As yet;" then turned away, to regain the spot where the Captain was busily engaged in collecting his scattered property.

It was with all her usual colour, and with a glad, joyous step, that Nan Ashton pursued her way that bright summer morning.

The die was cast; and poor George Holman, at that moment steering down the Channel, was forgotten by the girl upon whose lips had lingered his last kiss, and whose form had been gathered to his so passionately only a day or two previously.

"Is it really for me, Mr. Lester?"

"Really for you, Miss Ashton, if you will accept it."

"If, Mr. Lester! There is no doubt about the matter. Such a beautiful picture! And my dear seagull's just returning to me round the headland!"

They were standing in a little sitting room, in which were also an elderly lady friend of Nan's and her son, an old admirer. They were examining some of Allen's pictures.

"Which do you like best, Miss Ashton?" Allen Lester asked, presently, watching the lights and shades reflected on his companion's fair face.

"Which?" queried Nan, reflectively, then replied, "They are both so very very beautiful, and yet I can see a great difference. Yes, I like this the best."

The picture was certainly well worth Nan's admiration. It was in two sections. Upon the first, that on the left hand, stood out a bold headland against a summer sky, lit up by the crimson and gold of the hour of sunset. Deep down below, at the foot of the steep cliff, one caught a peep of the restless ocean, as it dashed in white feathery spray against the brown rocks. No human form was depicted, no animal life even, save with one exception; and that?—with grey outstretched wings, and head already out of sight, a stately gull was seeking its home round the headlands.

The second section was the very counterpart of the first, save for one slight difference, the difference that marked it for Nan's special preference. Clearly defined against the dark headland and sunset sky was again pictured the bird, with outstretched wings, but its flight was towards the gazer.

That was the only point of difference in the two sections. Allen took it from her and looked steadfastly at it.

"So much difference, Miss Ashton?" queried the artist, as he gazed intently at the picture.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Lester; and I can't explain it to you now," she added, turning herself away, but not before her companion had noted her flushed face and troubled look.

"May I hope to be told some day?" Allen Lester asked, in low tones that spoke of a hidden meaning.

They were now alone. Nan's visitors having discreetly withdrawn, Nan kept her face still persistently out of sight, and answered, in a voice that she tried to make cold and indifferent—but, ah! how she failed!

"I really can't say, Mr. Lester. But I am going to be very busy now, so I must send you away. I have letters to write, and all my things are awaiting me out in the summer-house."

"When may I come again, Miss Nan?"

It was the first time that her Christian name had escaped his lips, and he watched eagerly the effect of his boldness.

Nan started, while the warm blood suffused neck and face, and, do what she would to prevent it, a pleased look would steal round her mouth. One moment, and then the die was cast.

George Holman was quite forgotten for the time, as murmuring low she gave her reply,—

"I shall be finished in about an hour's time, Mr. Lester. Now I really must go."

As she spoke she threw wide open the low window, and stepped forth into the sunlit and flower-decked garden.

One backward look at the man standing in the small sitting-room intently watching her she bestowed; then pursued her way hastily to the small summer-house; awaiting her, spread forth upon a rustic table, were all the necessaries for her correspondence.

Sinking into a seat she laid her round arms upon the table, and leant her pretty, raven-haired head upon them, and gave way to her feelings.

Meanwhile Allen Lester was passing out at the gate leading to Laurel Lodge with a bright and happy smile upon his handsome face.

"She will be mine yet," he murmured to himself, a short time later, as he strolled leisurely along the brow of the cliff towards the stile where he had first made acquaintance with Nan Ashton.

"Yes," he reiterated, as he gained the spot, and, resting both elbows on the topmost bar, gazed seawards.

"Yes, she will yet be mine! And I thought once—ay, and but such a short time ago—that happiness for me was ever to remain a thing of the past; and now I am free—free to choose again, and this time there will be no flaw in my prize."

Half-an-hour slipped by, and found Allen Lester still in the same position, and at the same spot, totally wrapped up in his own sweet thoughts.

Some weeks had passed by since George Holman had sailed, and during the time that had intervened since Allen Lester's return to Sandporth, no mention of Nan Ashton's engagement to the former had reached the ears of the latter.

It may seem strange, but Sandporth was but such a small place, and the artist was a complete stranger to all save to Nan, her father, and cousin. From Nan the news was not likely to come, while as for Captain Ashton, he openly favoured and secretly encouraged the stranger-artist's visits for these reasons: The first, because he was the son of his old friend; the second, because he hoped to make the time pass more quickly for Nan.

And Lucy Arden?

She watched her cousin's face closely, and had noted for the first time the heightened colour, the brightening eye, and Allen Lester's approval.

And she, too, had been silent, for her own sake. If Nan were false to George Holman, it surely was not her place to interfere, when—and then she would blush and sigh, as she confessed to herself, alone, and in secret, that she loved George Holman with a love, unasked for, 'tis true, but still far greater and more lasting than the one he coveted.

Yes, Lucy Arden knew now, when the seas rolled between her and the object of her misplaced love, that her heart had gone forth with George Holman that morning when he had turned away from Laurel Lodge, waving a bright farewell to her as she stood alone at the open window.

Nan was at his side then, and the two were but gone forth at George's especial desire to bid each other farewell alone upon the cliffs; and she had followed their figures with a sad and longing gaze, and then the full recognition of this last fact had flooded her heart, and caused her to seek hastily her own room, where, in secret, and alone with the pale moonlight, and distant sea-murmuring, she might indulge in grief, and learn to conquer her love; but her maiden heart was wilful, and its love would have away; so that, as the days passed by, and she noted the constant meetings between Nan and Allen Lester—noted also how these meetings were a source of infinite pleasure to the pair she watched.

Then all her love for the absent one returned.

So the time slipped by. The day has arrived when Allen Lester has decided to test his fate, and before night fell to determine his lot.

So as he leaned against the stile his brain was busy weaving bright dreams and fancies for the future, when his lonely heart should be comforted, the dark stream of the bitter past be swallowed up in the bright waters of the happy present. Thus he dreamt away the hour that Nan had stipulated should be spent by her in writing her letters.

"I hope I am not returned too soon, Miss Nan?" he questioned, as he stood just within the summer-house, and let his brown eyes rest admiringly on the flushed face bending over the plain white sheet of note-paper, upon which, as yet, the pen had not traced its inky characters.

Nan started, glanced up at the handsome face of the man in the doorway, then down at the white surface spread before her, but answered not a word.

Allen repeated his question, still smiling courteously.

The girl still hesitated, then pointed with her pen to the page before her.

"Don't tell me that you have not yet commenced, Miss Nan!"

"I am afraid that I must confess such is the case, Mr. Lester," she replied, blushing, and toying nervously with the pen she held in her fingers.

"Never mind, Miss Nan. It is too bad to waste a whole summer morning on one's correspondence, however interesting it may be. Come away with me to your favourite spot; I am but just returned from it, and I can assure you our especial headland looks glorious this morning. Will you come, Miss Nan, and leave such dry and uninteresting affairs as letters? Is this particular one so very interesting and important?"

She waited patiently and heard him out, her face flushing with undisguised pleasure when he proposed her accompanying him to her own especial spot on the cliff. Then, as she felt the brown eyes fixed so earnestly upon her, she could not help giving one wee glance up at the face of the man whose tones were sounding so temptingly on her ear—one wee swift glance, and then she could bear no more.

Resting her arms on the table she let her head sink upon them, and there fell on Allen Lester's ear the sound of faint sobbing.

"Miss Ashton, Nan, what is it?" he asked, bending his head till it was on a level with the girl's.

Silence intervened for a few instants, while the faint sobbing still continued.

"My dear little Nan, I can't bear to see you like this. Let me know the cause of your grief and give me the right to comfort you. My little Nan, I would give all I possess to be able to dry these tears."

The manly hand wandered to the pretty raven-hued head, and stroked fondly and gently the silky tresses.

The girl started at the touch, and rising from her chair confronted Allen Lester with flushed and tear-stained face.

"Please go and leave me, Mr. Lester. I have been very wrong, I know, but—but I thought you knew."

"Thought I knew what, Miss Nan?"

"That—oh! Mr. Lester, I can't tell you, and yet you ought to know!" cried poor Nan, as she leaned against the wooden framework of the arbour, and covered her face with her hands.

Allen Lester drew nearer to her, and with quick, eager tones and pale, agitated face asked,—

"Tell me all that I ought to know, Miss Nan. For Heaven's sake do not keep me in suspense! I could not bear it from one whom I loved so—"

"Stop! oh, please stay, Mr. Lester!" pleaded the girl, holding out both her hands towards her companion.

He took the slender fingers in his hands, and bending forward whispered low,—

"Nan, my darling, tell me quickly why. I may not confess to you that I love you."

A shudder thrilled the girl's slight frame, and she hesitated to reply. Again her companion seemed about to speak when, at the mute pleading and foreboding plainly depicted on her face, the words died away unuttered, and only the love light in his brown eyes told the tale his mouth would fain have uttered. Then Nan spoke slowly, but in so low a tone that Allen Lester was obliged to bend his head still nearer to catch the accents.—

"Mr. Lester, you must not speak to me of your love, because it would be wrong of me to listen to it. Very wrong."

"Why?"

"Because I am already engaged to another."

Then he staggered away from her, throwing the slender fingers from his chest rudely, and, steadying himself against the table he murmured out,—

"Why was I not told this before?" and then he seemed to recollect something.

Drawing himself up, and fixing his dark eyes upon the girl standing before him with drooping head and sad expression, he said,—

"Miss Ashton, of course it would be wrong of you and dishonourable of me to speak of love between us two, but will you forgive me if I put one question to you? and will you promise to give it a true answer?"

Nan bowed her head slightly, and Allen Lester continued,—

"Miss Ashton, Nan, do you love this man to whom you say you are engaged?"

"Mr. Lester," began the girl, in indignant tones, but was stopped by her companion, who, taking one of her hands in his, continued in deep, earnest tones,—

"Nay, do not be angry with me, little Nan. I know full well, and so do you, that we love one another. I know it well, and I pity that other—the one to whom you are engaged, for I know that your heart is mine alone! yes, mine alone, little Nan!"

The tears fell thickly from Nan Ashton's deep blue eyes as she stood with bowed head before the man who loved her best, and to whom she had unconsciously given the wealth of love that should have been George Holman's; and Allen Lester continued to clasp her slender fingers in his, and to gaze entranced, with sad and longing look, upon the pretty bowed head and tear-stained face.

"Nan, little Nan!" came once again from his lips; and then the girl remembered herself.

"Oh! let me go, Mr. Lester. Let me go," she cried.

"And your letter, Nan?"

"I shall never write that now, Mr. Lester," "Not the one you intended, Nan, but another?"

"I don't know yet," hesitatingly and blushing replied the girl, letting her head droop still lower.

But the true, the hesitating reply satisfied her listener. Releasing the little hands from the grasp in which he had hitherto held them, Allen Lester retreated a few steps from his companion, and lifting his hat, said, slowly and sadly,—

"Farewell for the present, Miss Ashton. I am going away farther down the coast, and shall be absent a few weeks, but when I return perhaps I may be allowed to call again—if you have written your letter."

Silence for a minutes, while Allen stood, hat in hand, regarding with anxious gaze the girl he loved.

"I have told you I can never write the letter I had intended; but I must write another, I suppose. If it is written—"

"But you will write?" broke in the man's voice.

"I will try," Nan murmured, softly. Then added, "I shall visit the stile on the cliffs often in the coming weeks."

"Thank you, Miss Ashton. Now I will once more say farewell, and look forward to our next meeting," and then he was fairly gone; and Nan was alone.

Gathering up papers, pen, and ink, she returned with slow, thoughtful steps to the house. There, pleading a severe headache to her cousin, she sought refuge in her own chamber, and in its solitude and seclusion rehearsed, in her mind, the events of the past few hours.

"What must I do?" she questioned of herself, as she sat with flushed face and nervous fingers, thinking over the late interview with Allen Lester—with the man she loved so truly, for she did not attempt any concealment of the fact; only was puzzled how to act.

A letter must be written to the one beyond the seas—the one who had gone away trusting her so implicitly; and she had deceived him to the last!—had let him depart in silence, when a few words had told that all; and she had felt she could not utter them. And now they must be written, and that soon.

So during the long, weary hours that followed Nan Ashton sat alone in her room, and, with flushed face and dishevelled locks, gave herself up to the task of inditing the letter that would bear to George Holman the welcome truth that he was freed from any engagement to the girl he loved so dearly.

Five o'clock was striking by the clock in the hall as Nan once again descended, and entered the sitting-room. Her cousin Lucy was there alone.

"I hope your head is better now, Nan dear?" the latter said.

"Much better, dear, thank you. I have been writing letters, and that is always a source of trouble to me."

Lucy Arden glanced quickly and keenly at her cousin.

"Not always, Nan, surely?" she corrected.

"Yes, always, Lucy; and more particularly than ever to-day. For I—Lucy, George Holman is nothing to me now, and you love him, I know."

"Nan!" exclaimed Lucy, with crimson face.

"Lucy, it is perfectly true. Something that happened when I was in the arbour this morning decided me. And I have written the letter, and by-and-by I shall go out and post it. Don't tell anyone just yet. I shall tell papa myself, and then nothing further need be said."

"Oh, Nan, George will be so vexed!" sobbed Lucy.

"I can't help it, Lucy. It would be cruel and wicked of me to let him still go on thinking that I care for him when I really do not. And, Lucy, some day he may find another to

take my place, or who will bring him more love than I ever have. So dry your tears, and let us be cheerful. Here is papa coming up the lawn."

"Nan, to-morrow will be our wedding-day!" "Yes, Allen," faintly replied Nan Ashton, as she turned a radiant face towards the man at her side.

"Yes," continued Allen Lester, in a reflective tone, as he bent his gaze seaward, while a contented and satisfied expression stole over his face. "Yes, little Nan, to-morrow is our wedding day—yours and mine, little Nan! And I shall be so proud, so happy, when I hold your hand in mine, and listen to the sacred words that are to bind us to one another 'till death do us part.' It is a serious time in our lives, but, thank Heaven! we can trust each other thoroughly. Is it not so, dear?"

"Allen, I trust you, and nothing should ever shake my faith."

"Nothing, Nan? Supposing that even upon your very wedding-morn I were to fail you, could you love and trust me still?"

The tears rushed quickly into the girl's deep blue eyes, as she clung still more tightly and closely to the strong arm upon which her fingers were resting. But no sound escaped her small, red lips as she reflected, for a single instant, upon the horrible thought of what she should do, should her lover's words by chance be fulfilled. He—Allen—to forsake her on the morrow! No! such a thing could never be true, and she would at once dismiss the idea. So, raising her tear-filled eyes to the dark brown ones regarding her so earnestly and anxiously, she replied, eagerly,—

"Oh! Allen, such a test of faith will never be mine! For to-morrow is our wedding-day."

"I know it, little Nan, and I rejoice in the thought. But still, dear, let me hear from your lips that you would really trust and love me, even though I were missing to-morrow morning."

"Allen, it is cruel and unkind of you to fill my mind with such sad and dreadful thoughts on this eve of our wedding-day! Surely you know I love you with all my heart—ay, love you as life itself!" came the passionate reply.

"My own little Nan!" murmured the man, bending low to kiss the quivering lips. "My own little Nan!" he repeated, in fond, caressing tones. I am sorry if I have vexed you, but—oh, Nan, Nan! I have had so much to contend with in the past that I feel I shall not be contented till I have your answer."

"Allen, if you were to forsake me now, this moment, I should still continue to love and trust you. Still, I could not help myself, for, oh, Allen! I love so very, very dearly!"

"Thank Heaven, little Nan! I will never put your faith and love to the terrible test, unless Fate compels me to do so!" replied Allen Lester, bending again low to kiss the face so near his.

It was the hour of sunset, and Allen Lester and Nan Ashton were watching the great luminary as he sunk lower and lower in the western sky—watching the ever-changing shades of crimson and gold, as they stood, side by side, at the stile, where they first made acquaintance. And on the morrow they were to stand side by side and hand in hand in the small church at Sandporth, and register the sacred vows which were to bind them to each other for life!

And Allen Lester's heart was full of a deep joy, as he reflected on the bitter past and looked forward to the bright future with its wealth of love and contentment, which was to be his when Nan Ashton was his bride—looked forward to it all, and, with love-clouded eyes, saw not the advancing form of the dark Fate that was even now dogging his footsteps!

And Nan, too, looked forward to the morrow when she should become Allen Lester's bride. Her face caught the crimson glow of the distant sunset, as she stood there and glanced at the bold headland to her right.



"Little Nan, I shall always remember this evening," whispered her lover, and he sighed as he spoke; a sigh full of deep contentment and satisfied desire.

"And so shall I," his companion replied, letting her gaze rove from bold headland to heaving ocean, from restless sea to brown ocean, and then back again to her lover's face.

A few more moments of silent admiration of the scene, and then, as the sun disappeared into the sea of crimson and gold, the two turned and pursued their homeward way across the heather-robed cliff.

An hour later and Allen Lester entered his sitting-room at his lodgings. Flinging wide the window he seated himself at it, and lighting a cigar, prepared for a quiet smoke.

"Dear little Nan!" he murmured between the puffs of his fragrant cigar. "I shall never doubt your love and trust in me now! Never!"

And then there came a modest tap at the door and his landlady entered.

"A telegram for you, please, sir," "Thank you, Mrs. Brown. Will you bring a light, please?" answered Allen Lester; and then he carelessly placed the yellow envelope on the table at his side, and continued his smoking, all unconscious of what awaited him.

Lights were brought him, but still he smoked on, ruminating still on the happiness and brightness of the future!

The cruel harbinger of sorrow and despair lay neglected close by!

A light crimson rose was nodding in the soft, summer breeze, and flaunting its sweet-scented petals just within his grasp. He put forth his hand and plucked it.

"How well it would look amid little Nan's raven-hued tresses!" he murmured, holding the dainty flower in his fingers, and noting the superb hue of its petals.

His mind was still full to overflowing with thoughts, bright and tender, of the fair maiden so soon to be his, while the soft light fell athwart the yellow missive at his elbow, and seemed to bring it forth into fuller, bolder relief. Swinging his head slightly on one side, the better to admire the rich bloom on the deep-hearted rose, his eye was attracted by the envelope. He started slightly, while a deep flush overspread his manly features. For the sight of the same brought back clearly to his memory when and where he had last seen a similar missive. His gaze was fascinated by it, and as he regarded the same with wide, staring eyes, memory, with her indelible ink, sketched the scene for him in bold, black characters, that had nothing of softness about them—sketched the scene of the past, which he would fain have forgotten for ever!—would have cast far from him on this the eve of his second wedding-day.

But memory was inexorable, and the scenes and events of the past came again before his mind's eye!

And then he picked up the dreadful thing, and slowly opened it.

One glance at the few pencilled words was sufficient. All the cruel imaginings were realized then; and he must go away at once! Go away by that evening's mail, and leave the girl who was to have been made his bride on the morrow! Leave her with no explanation, but simply with a few pleading and beseeching words to ask and implore her to be true to him still—true to him till he could again claim her!

And yet, was it right of him to ask this much of her? Yes! For had she not herself declared that nothing could destroy her love for and trust in him?

Therefore he decided, and let the few, earnest words of deep pleading go their way. Then he slowly and, as in a dream, put together his few things and prepared to start upon his journey.

Six hours later and he sat alone in a first-class compartment, with none to bear him company but his own sad reflections, and was whirled away towards the great city, where lived his friend and adviser, Dick Morton.

And Nan Ashton?

She received the few pencilled words which told her of her lover's departure, as she was engaged in arranging the lovely blossoms for the decoration of to-morrow's breakfast-table. Smilingly, and with a bright, expectant look on her fair, flushed face, she opened the tiny note and prepared to peruse her lover's last fond message.

But as she read on the smile faded from her face; the bright carmine of her cheek suddenly changed to ashen hue, and, with a mournful cry of "Allen, my love! my love! Come back to me!" she fell senseless to the floor.

"I have come as you requested."

"Ah; I am glad I sent for you, Allen. I am your wife still, you know, and I thought it right that you should know I was ill. Besides, you know, it would have been such a terrible thing for that poor young girl to have learnt that her marriage was not lawful!"

"Don't mention her name!" almost fiercely cried Allen Lester, as his face darkened.

His companion tossed her head scornfully upon her pillow, and then, with a harsh laugh, replied, while she fixed her large black eyes upon her husband's face, and watched, almost fiendishly, the changing expression thereon.

"Well, it doesn't matter whether I do or not. My words can't hurt her. Still I am glad I saved her from sorrow! Poor little Nan Ashton!"

"Woman! will you cease to speak of her?" thundered forth Allen Lester.

Again the defiant motion of the sick woman's head; again the mocking laugh, as still her eyes kept their watch. Again her husband spoke.

"I came here at your request, and, if you wish your request fulfilled, beware how you trifle with me!"

"At my request?" echoed the woman. "Ah, yes, I remember. They sent you a telegram and I—I worded it. So I did. Can you remember the actual words, Allen?"

"Not the actual words, but I can give their substance if you require it. You were dying, and you needed my forgiveness, and I am here."

A burst of harsh laughter proceeded from the sick woman as Allen Lester concluded.

"Ah; that is how I put it. I remember now. Now let me read the telegram as I actually sent it, since I have deceived you sufficiently: 'I am starving, and I need your money!' Ay, that is what I sent, Allen Lester! But it doesn't matter, you have rather eased me, and done me good, I think. And now you can give me the money, and then go back to that other girl and ask her to wait a little longer. The doctor says I can't last much longer, so I shall not come between you for any great while. Come, how much money are you going to let me have? I owe a good bit to the landlady, and then there is the doctor and a heap of others to be paid."

There was somewhat of pleading in the harsh tones as the woman noted, with her keen, black eyes, the ominous frown darkening her husband's countenance. For one brief instant she feared whether she had tried him too much, feared lest he might leave her there to starve and die without the necessities that would alleviate the intense pain she was suffering! But the next moment her fears vanished, and again her scornful laugh broke forth as she clutched, with trembling fingers, at the golden sovereigns Allen Lester drew from his pocket and flung down on the counterpane.

"One—two—three—four. Ah! I can't count them!" she exclaimed, in tired accents.

"There are exactly twenty, and if they are not enough I can let you have more. This much I will do for you, but—"

"You will stay no longer by me, Allen Lester? Then you may go! I do not want you. I have given you two great shocks in your lifetime; ay, more than two! You thought I was dead, and so you made love to yonder pretty maiden, and then, just on the eve of your happiness, I appeared once more! Well,

I am sorry for it all now, and you can forgive me if you like."

"Not now. Later on, perhaps!"

"As you like. You can write it if you would rather," replied his companion. Then added, as her feeble fingers clutched eagerly at the gold as her husband prepared to depart.

"You may wonder how I gained so much knowledge of your movements; but Allen, believe me, as I lie here on my death-bed, I have been sorry at times for all the misery I have occasioned you, and so I determined to save you and that other from further misery and shame. You will forgive me, husband?"

Allen Lester could not speak, but his brown eyes rested for a moment on the face he had once deemed so beautiful, rested on the pale, wan cheeks, and noted the anxious, imploring look in the eyes that it had once been his delight to look into the depths of, and then there stole a look of pity as he turned away with a movement of acquiescence and left his wife's room.

A short while later on and the doctor stood at the bedside of the dying woman and held a reviving cordial to her lips.

"Read it for me, doctor! Oh, do let me hear my husband's words of forgiveness before I die!"

The kind-hearted doctor read in slow, distinct tones, the few words telling of forgiveness for all the wrongs and misery wrought by the woman lying back, with closed eyes and moving lips, listening, oh! so greedily, to the consoling words!

And thus, with the last syllable of her husband's forgiveness in her ears, her spirit departed, and Allen Lester was free to think again of his other love!

"Nan!"

"Yes, papa."

"My child, fretting will do no good. Come out with me, dear, and let the sight of the grand, bold headlands read to you a lesson of patience and strength!"

Five weeks had passed since the fatal missive had been delivered to Nan Ashton, as she was busy amid the fair and fragrant children of Nature that were to be to her and those around her the outward signs of the great happiness and purity which were to solemnise the day upon which she would plight her troth to Allen Lester.

Five long dreary weeks, with ne'er a gleam of inward sunshine to redeem their intense greyness and weariness!

For no second missive had arrived to condemn or extenuate that first fatal one—fatal as regards the blow it dealt the happiness of our heroine! In its stead had arrived a long, pleading letter from George Holman—a letter which brought the tears to Nan Ashton's eyes, as she realised, loving another as she did, how much and intensely another loved her—but vainly!

Five weeks which had served to chase the roses from Nan Ashton's cheeks, and to take all the elasticity from her usually light and buoyant step.

Still she did not despair—did not for one moment doubt her lover's truth and love; but firmly believed that someday he would return to claim her, and then all the mystery would be cleared up. For the few words sent her on her supposed bridal eve had told her nothing of the reasons that had led to her lover's desertion of her.

Yet still, notwithstanding all, she was faithful to the man for whose sake she had set aside and discarded another's love!

The evening was a bright one, towards the end of September.

Nan and her father were sitting, after an early tea, in the little sitting-room, with its windows looking into the garden; and Nan, as her father spoke, glanced instinctively away to the little brown summer-house in the distance, and thought of that day, not so many weeks since, when he had been with her, and

had begged her to leave her letters and come forth with him!

Then the Captain spoke again.

"Nan, my child, leave off dreaming over the past, and come out with me into the glorious present! The wind has been so high all day long that I am sure the waves must be coming in with grand foam-covered crests—and how they must be dashing against the brown rocks under the 'parlour'! I am afraid my little girl is forgetting all the delight she used to experience in witnessing the grand Cornish scenery. And I myself want a draught of the pure sea air. Somehow I do not feel so strong to-night as I might. Ah! the cares and worries of this life age one terribly. But I see how it is, child; you have lost all interest in our walks here!"

The low tone and a certain touching pathos roused the girl.

"Oh! no, papa; that I am sure I never can! I will put on my things at once, and come out with you. And then I shall be able to get some roots of the sea-pink for Lucy. She asked for some when she wrote yesterday. I shan't be very long, papa."

"I am in no great hurry, Nan, my dear," replied the Captain, as he arose, laid down pipe and paper, and went forth into the small hall to equip himself for the walk.

"I must tell her sooner or later—and the sight of cliff and wave will give me courage. Poor little girl!" muttered the Captain to himself, as he took his stick from the stand.

Half-an-hour later, and the father and daughter stood on the brink of the steep grey cliff, and watched how the ever restless ocean dashed itself in vain fury against the brown seaweeded rocks, while the starting rays of the western sun fell athwart the fairy-like sheets of spray that rose high above the angry waves, and dressed them in prismatic hues.

"How beautiful it all is, papa, dear!" exclaimed Nan, as she leant forward and gazed with wide-opened eyes at the scene before her.

"Magnificent!" emphatically replied the Captain; then cleared his voice, as though to add more, glanced at his daughter, and then turned his gaze once more seaward.

Then silence fell, while both were busy with his and her own special musings.

Nan's, needless to say, were with the absent lover; while her father's were of a grave and serious nature, evidently. For as Nan glanced up at him, when turning away from the scene before her, she was struck by the careworn look and grey ashen pallor that overshadowed his face.

"Papa! what is the matter?" she exclaimed.

"Eh, my child?" the Captain replied; and the words came as though from one roused from a dream.

"Papa, you are not well! We had better return at once. And, see, the sun has disappeared! I think we are going to have a storm!"

"Yes—yes, Nan; a storm! Poor little girl! She has had trouble enough—and now a fresh trial awaits her!"

"Oh! papa, what is it? Do tell me!" pleaded Nan, now thoroughly frightened.

"Not now, my child, not now. Wait till we get home. I feel very tired, Nan. Give me your arm, child."

And so, with tottering and weak steps, the Captain retraced slowly, and with apparent difficulty, the path that he had trodden firmly but a short time previously.

Home was reached at length, and then he further added to his daughter's anxiety by declaring that he was too fatigued for his usual evening pipe, and that he must at once retire to his room; then again, a little later on, and he expressed a desire to see the doctor.

The latter came and looked very grave indeed when Nan questioned him respecting her father.

"Much the matter, Miss Ashton?" he repeated, as he took her hand and led her back into the sitting-room from whence she had

emerged to hear his verdict. "Now, sit down here, and remember there is always hope for all in this world."

"Oh! Dr. Worth, please tell me the truth at once?" pleaded Nan, looking up tearfully at the kind but grave face bending over her, as she was gently, but forcibly, placed in an easy-chair.

"Yes, I will tell you the truth, Miss Ashton, but remember we must still hope that to-morrow may find your father much better. He has been too anxious lately respecting some money-matters, he tells me, and the worry has brought on a slight weakness of the heart."

"But that is very serious and dangerous, Dr. Worth?"

"Sometimes, Miss Ashton. Still, we must hope. I look to you to be calm and cheerful, and not on any account to let your father see you fretting. You will try, I know, Miss Ashton. Now I must be going, as I have another patient to visit. Shall give a look in again the first thing to-morrow morning, and hope to find the Captain much better. I will send up some drops, which you must administer at the times specified. Good evening, Miss Ashton, and remember and be cheerful when with your father."

Taking Nan's small hand within his own, Dr. Worth pressed it in compassionate silence, and then quitted the room.

When the hall door had closed behind him he muttered, as he walked down the gravel path,—

"Poor girl! What a trial for her! and so young and so pretty! Ah, well! I must do my best to make a provision for my little ones."

And Nan?

She remained sitting where the doctor had left her, with bowed head and clasped hands, while ever and anon the large tears fell on to the pretty light dress she wore.

Thicker and faster came the drops from the wide-opened blue eyes, as she sat there wrapt in her own sorrowful thoughts.

Then a slight sound from the room above—her father's bed-chamber—aroused her. Arising, she slowly dried her eyes, smoothed her ruffled hair, and with soft and light footsteps ascended to her father's room.

"Nan?"

"I am here, papa, dear."

"Come nearer, child. Bring that chair and place it here so that I can see your face. Ah!" continued the Captain, as Nan obeyed, and with a forced smile seated herself where the light from the small lamp on the neighbouring table fell full upon her face, "that is my good, courageous little Nan! My child, have you seen and spoken to the doctor?"

"Yes, papa."

The girl's lips quivered.

"And what does he say?" whispered the Captain, as he raised himself slightly upon one elbow.

Nan started; then, remembering the doctor's last injunction, smiled feebly and made reply in as cheerful a tone as she could assume,—

"He said you were not to worry about anything, as worry was a bad thing for us all," replied Nan, in what she considered a satisfactory manner.

But the word "worry" was sufficient for the sick man.

"Ah! yes, I remember now. Nan, my child, I shall not be with you much longer."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed the girl, as she clasped her hands tightly together to repress the sob that she longed to give vent to.

"No, my child, I feel my time has come, and I must submit. I have worried very much lately, and it is that that has made me ill; not that I am sorry to go, but, Nan, I cannot leave you independent, as I had hoped. No, I have been unfortunate with the investment of my own private property, and for the last few months have only had my pension to depend upon, so that my child will be penniless, or nearly so, at her father's death. I am

very sorry, Nan. I had hoped to have done well for you."

"Oh, papa, please don't trouble about me! Dr. Worth said you were not to worry about business matter, or you would be quite ill, so please do not think any more about money. Shall I fetch the paper and read to you?"

"Yes, you may fetch it, Nan," quietly replied the Captain.

Nan rose and hastened downstairs, where she relieved her strained and pent-up feelings by a good fit of weeping. Then, paper in hand, she once more ascended to her father's room.

"Now, papa, what shall I read?" she cheerfully asked.

"My child, put the paper aside. I shall soon have done with all that concerns this world. Put the paper away and come near to me, my child. The room is growing very dark."

And then the girl broke down utterly. Forgetting all the doctor's injunctions she flung herself down upon her knees at her father's bedside, while her whole frame shook violently with her sobs.

"Nan," gently spoke her father.

She replied not.

"Nan, we have but a few minutes longer together, child. Do not sadden them by an excess of weeping. Dry your eyes, and listen to me."

"Oh, papa, do not leave me yet!" sobbed poor Nan, partially obeying her father's command, and lifting her tear-stained face to his.

"My child, when Death calls no man may say him nay," sadly replied the Captain. Then added, "Nan, have you heard from him?"

"Not since that night, papa."

"And George, Nan?"

"He has written, papa."

"And what does he say, child?"

Nan hesitated.

"There, never mind telling me, Nan. I know he must be disappointed, and so am I, Nan. My child, do you not think it would be wiser to send him a few lines telling him that you have reconsidered?"

"Oh, papa, you do not know how I love Allan Lester!"

"But, think, Nan, he may never return to you, and then a few short hours—nay, minutes even—and you will have no home but Lucy's to go to," urged the sick man.

"Papa, I could not give up Allan Lester. I shall always love him, even though he never return to me."

"Well, well, Nan, it must be as you will, I suppose," hurriedly replied the Captain.

And then he sank back upon his pillow, and closed his eyes. Nan watched breathlessly for a few seconds, then whispered,—

"Papa, shall I send for Dr. Worth?"

"No, no, Nan. It would be useless. I have done with doctors altogether. Just put your hand in mine, child, and then I think I shall go to sleep."

Nan obeyed, and so through the long, weary hours she knelt, her hand clasped in her father's—knelt on thus, watching him till, tired and worn-out, nature asserted its own rights, and sleep overcame her—a dull, heavy sleep, of sorrow's own sending, from which she was aroused hours later by the kind touch of the doctor.

"How is papa, Dr. Worth?" she questioned, as she was being gently led from the room.

"Come away with me," was the gentle reply, and then Nan Ashton knew that she was indeed fatherless.

"Ah, Holman! Is that you?"

"My very own self is before you, Mathers."

"Well, I must say I don't think China has done much for you, my boy."

"What do you mean?"

"Why everything. You are looking more like a ghost than anything else. Don't speak much for the 'grub' over yonder. For my part I prefer the roast beef of old England."



Don't I look as though I rather appreciated the good things of this life, my boy?"

"Rather!" exclaimed George Holman, as he contemplated with amused countenance the rubicund visage and decidedly rounded figure of his friend.

But the smile soon died away, and a sad look soon replaced it. His friend was quick to note the same.

"I tell you what it is, Holman," the latter continued. "There is something decidedly wrong with you. Come home with me. The enemy is just going the half-hour; in exactly thirty minutes more I sit down to my solitary dinner. Why should not you share it if you have nothing better to do? Come on! I can promise you some first-rate sherry, and then we can have a chat over old times, when you and I were at old Bateson's together. Regular old screw he was, to be sure. Come, don't stand still in indecision, but say yes or no to my proposition?"

George Holman hesitated yet another moment; then, seeing the anxiety depicted on his friend's face, he placed his hand upon the latter's shoulder, and replied in the affirmative.

"That is right, my boy. Now, you will see how much better you will feel, in every respect, after an hour or two of my society!" remarked young Mathers, as he triumphantly led his companion up one street and down another, till his own private apartments were reached.

An hour or so later, and the two were comfortably settled, with decanter, glasses, and cigars.

Then, as the first puffs arose from George Holman's cigar, his friend broke forth again.

"Now, Holman, if you have no objection, I should like a sketch of your life and doings since you and I chummed together at Brick House. Now commence, and, remember, you have an excellent listener."

"Ah, Mathers! you are not one bit changed!" replied George Holman, as he glanced across, through the smoke, at his friend's jolly visage.

"Glad to hear it, my lad!" that individual rejoined; then modestly added, "I have lost none of my entertaining powers, that was formerly the pride of my schoolfellows, which is a good thing for you, Holman; for, certainly, I never saw a fellow so in need of a little cheering as you appeared to require when I met you this afternoon. But I can understand it all; you are in love, George Holman!"

The latter started, while a flush dyed his bronzed cheek—a flush that did not escape his companion.

"I knew I was right! In fact, I always am! But, really, Holman, I am glad to have the chance of being made a confidante of in such an affair. Love, and so forth, are things not much in my line. Too thinning for my constitution, don't you know?"

And Harry Mathers looked so distressed at the mere thought, as he spoke, that his companion was obliged to put aside the cigar he held between his lips, and indulge in a hearty laugh.

"Well done! Bravo! Now we are getting on!" exclaimed his host, as he rose and refilled his guest's glass; then added, as he resumed his seat, "But, seriously, my boy, tell me all about it, if it will in any way relieve your feelings."

George Holman hesitated for a second, then spoke.

"Mathers, I have been hardly used!" "Ah! that is bad news!" sympathised the other.

"Yes, very badly used," continued George Holman, as he puffed away.

"Tell me all about it," murmured the other.

"Well, you see, I left England engaged to one of the sweetest and nicest girls as man could find anywhere, left her with the fullest hopes of a speedy return and a bright wedding;

but a letter came from her, telling me that she had never really loved me, and that she had seen another, and so forth. You may believe, Mathers, how cut-up I was. In fact, at first, I could not bring myself to believe the letter was genuine. But facts are facts, however stubborn one may be respecting them, and so I came gradually to realise that all was over between me and Nan Ashton."

"Pretty name!" broke in Harry Mathers.

"Yes, it has always seemed so to me," replied George Holman. "I have tried to forget her, but it is impossible! I am now in England for a short time only, but I feel I must see her once again, before too late, and try my luck. Whether she is engaged to this other or not I care not. I will speak once again, and try and recover my lost love. Ah, Mathers! you are a happy fellow, if you have proved conqueror, and are indeed fancy-free!"

"Yes; I also consider myself lucky, I can assure you; not but that I have had work to chase away the little blind boy from my elbow. Of course, the good-looking ones of the present generation have always most trouble," conceitedly replied Harry Mathers, as he arranged his spotless tie with a graceful elegance.

"Never mind the looks, Mathers; it is the feelings that get hurt the most. You see, I was so certain of settling down some day with the sweetest little bride that was ever seen, and then—I get such a letter!"

George Holman passed his hand suspiciously across his eyes as he concluded.

"Poor old fellow, I am very sorry for you!" broke in the other, in deep, hearty tones, from which had disappeared all his former lightness of speech.

George Holman spoke not, but, stretching forth his hand, found it grasped cordially by his friend.

Sympathy is sweet in word, but more effective in action.

"When do you expect to see her?" asked Harry Mathers, after a few moments' silence.

"To-morrow morning."

"I wish you every success, I am sure, my boy; but don't be too sanguine. If the case is hopeless take my advice, and look out for someone else to console you. Don't lose heart in life and its duties just simply because a woman changes her mind."

"Thank you, Mathers, for your good advice, but I am afraid I can't profit by it at present," George Holman replied, as he arose and prepared to bid his friend and host good-night.

"Nan!"

"George!"

"I have come back, Nan, to try my chance before it is too late."

The day was a bright and sunny one, and Nan Ashton had gone forth into the gardens near her cousin's house. For the Captain's prophecy had proved a true one, and Nan Ashton's pittance at her father's death was but a small one.

Kind friends had come forward, and Lucy herself had come down and begged her cousin to make her home with her, pleading that she had enough for both; and so, for the time, Nan consented, only stipulating that when she felt stronger she should be allowed to go forth and earn a livelihood, till—

But to return.

It was the day following George Holman's meeting with his old friend, Harry Mathers, and, true to his determination, he had called, and found Nan had gone forth into the gardens.

With scarcely more than a word, or two of greeting to Lucy Arden, he had retaken his hat, and set out in the direction in which he hoped to find Nan.

And there, seated amid the budding trees, with the sunlight flickering through the branches around her, George Holman met once again the girl for whose sake he had

travelled so many weary miles across the mighty main.

"Nan, I have come back, and have you no word of welcome for me?" he continued, taking both the tiny gloved hands in his, and bending low to catch a glance from the sweet blue eyes.

But Nan Ashton spoke not.

Only a shiver seemed to thrill her frame, as she became conscious of the intensity of the gaze resting upon her.

"Nan," spoke the latter again, "say but one word, or give me but one look, to convince me that my voyage has not been in vain?" he pleaded in low, earnest tones.

Then the girl slowly raised her head, and let her eyes fall for a brief instant upon his grey ones, as she murmured, softly,—

"Yes, George, there is hope for you."

"My darling!" he began, in rapturous accents; but his joy was soon quenched by the girl's next words. Drawing herself further from him, and disengaging her fingers from his grasp, she continued,—

"Do not mistake my words, George; there is hope for you, but I do not speak for myself."

"Nan, I came here to hear of yourself, not of others."

"Don't be impatient, George," she pleaded. "I have no love to give you in return for yours, but—"

"Oh, Nan, Nan! why did you send me that cruel letter?" broke in the man at her side.

"Because it was best for you and best for me, George," the girl replied.

"I can't believe it, Nan. That other can never love you half as well as I loved, and still love, you."

"George, we will not enter into that. But listen! Would you have me marry you knowing that my heart had gone astray to another? Answer me that, George."

"But, Nan, why need you have proved false to me?"

"Stop, George; do not say false. That I could not be to any man if I really loved him," the girl replied, and a proud look shone in her blue eyes.

"Forgive me, Nan," George Holman whispered, as he noted the angry flush on her cheek.

Then silence fell for a few minutes, while the birds overhead sang their gayest and sweetest, unheeded and unmindful of the struggle in the human hearts beneath.

George was the first to break the silence.

"Nan," he asked gently, "when is it to be?"

Nan Ashton started, while the crimson flush suffused her face.

"Don't answer, Nan, if you would rather not."

"I will tell you all, George, if you have not yet heard my story. Has not Lucy told you?"

"I merely called in to see you, Nan, so that when they told me you were here I left at once and came forth to find you," replied George Holman.

"Then I will tell you all. Not that it is necessary to inflict my troubles upon you, but it will prove to you how impossible anything like love can be between us again."

"Oh, Nan, Nan! If it could only be!" pleaded her companion.

But Nan Ashton shook her head and turned away her face, that the other might not see the effort she was making to control her feelings.

"George, I never really loved you as you would have wished me to love you."

"But I was content, Nan."

"Yes, you were content, I know; but that night when you got the roots for Lucy, and I sat on the stile alone waiting for you, opened my eyes clearly, and I knew that I did not love you as the woman should love the man she is to marry; and then I met Allen Lester."

"And now you are engaged to him, and will soon be married to him, Nan!" inter-

rupted George Holman, as the girl stopped to force back the tears that were so near the surface.

"Wait, George, and hear the end. We were engaged, and my bridal-vee arrived; and then, as I was busy amid my flowers for our quiet wedding on the morrow, a note was brought me."

"Nan," exclaimed her companion, rising from his seat, and speaking excitedly. "Nan, do not tell me that he has been false to you!"

"Oh! George! why will you not have patience? My tale will soon be told," sadly spoke Nan Ashton.

Then motioning him with a sweet, sad smile to his former seat, she continued,—

"Only a few pencilled words, but since that night I have never seen or heard sight of Allen Lester. But I—"

"You can't love him still?"

"Yes, George; and none but he will I ever call husband! No; no other man's kisses shall rest on my lips, even though I never meet Allen Lester more!"

George Holman stared in sorrow and astonishment at the girl as she spoke. He had heard and read much of woman's love, of woman's faith, but this was his first experience in real life.

"Nan, Nan!" he almost sobbed.

"Do let me be to you as we were before? I will be quite content with half your heart. But as for Allen Lester—"

"Do not speak harshly of him, George; at least, not to me. He will come back some day—perhaps, very soon, and then I shall be happy again. Now we will go home, please, and remember, not a word of this passes between us henceforth. Can you guess whose face will brighten when your name is announced? For we shall often meet, George. Ah! believe me, we shall yet celebrate a double wedding when all comes round, as it should be; and Lucy will be as happy as I."

"Nan, she would not listen to me."

"Make a trial, George. I am perfectly confident you will be successful, for she has confessed to me— But speak to her yourself. Now we will go home, please."

And so, sadly and thoughtfully, George Holman retraces the way side by side with the woman for whom he had spent many a weary and lonely watch as his ship ploughed her way through the deep blue sea.

"Nan, will you come with me to the Academy this afternoon?"

"I do not think I care to, Lucy," replied Nan, languidly and indifferently.

"But, Nan, you are so fond of pictures; and I hear there are some lovely bits of Cornish scenery exhibited this year. Nan, dear, you must come; I wish it so much."

"Very well then, I will come to please you; but I really do not care for pictures so much as I did at one time."

"I can guess the reason why; but, perhaps, you may see some bits of scenery that may remind you of Sandporth. I shall be ready about half-past two."

A few hours later, and Nan Ashton, accompanied by her cousin, were strolling leisurely through the Academy rooms.

The deep blue eyes still bore the same sorrowful expression that had now become habitual to them.

Her mind was busy with thoughts of her artist-lover as her gaze fell on the pictures around her.

Suddenly she stopped, while a rosy flush spread quickly over her pale cheeks. Her heart beat violently.

Turning to her cousin, she murmured,—

"These rooms are so hot, Lucy; I really think I must sit down awhile. But do not let me take you from the pictures. Ah! here comes George! He shall be your escort while I rest here."

A few minutes later, and it was all arranged as Nan wished.

Lucy Arden departed, with glad, smiling

face, in company with George Holman, while Nan was left alone.

As soon as the other two had quite disappeared from sight she rose, and advancing with quick steps towards a small picture exactly facing her, stopped and gazed up at it with flushed face.

"Ah, my seagull! When will you return to me?" she murmured softly to herself, as with tightly-clasped hands she gazed upward at the snowy wings of the sea-bird, as it appeared as though flying towards her. For the picture that had so arrested her, and caused her so much agitation, was the exact counterpart of the one presented her by Allen Lester.

No one was near her; so she stood gazing intently at the picture that stirred within her thoughts and times of other days.

Tears gathered in her eyes as she again murmured,—

"Oh Allen, Allen, come back to me! My love! my love!"

Then something—she knew not what—seemed to warn her that she was not alone.

Turning, hastily she came face to face with Allen Lester.

Yes! There he stood with sad eyes looking down so wistfully at the little figure draped in black.

"Allen!" exclaimed Nan in faint, but joyful tone.

"Nan!"

And then two heads met and two pairs of eyes looked into each other with all the old love in their shining depths.

"Oh, Allen, I have so longed for this hour!" whispered Nan, glancing shyly up at her lover's face.

"And I too, Nan! I have sought you everywhere to give some explanation of my conduct, which must have appeared heartless to you. But this is not the time or place for such explanation. May I call later on?"

"Come at eight this evening. I shall be alone then, Lester."

"Nan, my love! My true love!" exclaimed Allen Lester, as once again he clasped to him Nan Ashton's form. Then added, as he looked with pain upon the wasted and faded cheeks before him,— "But, Nan, little Nan, you have been fretting for me?"

Nan smiled a bright and radiant smile, as she glanced back with happy, trusting eyes, and moaned softly,—

"Not very much, Allen. I knew you would come back some day. Ah, I am so glad it has come true at last!"

"How can I ever thank you little Nan, for thus trusting and believing in me, even when I have no doubt, your faith was tried to its uttermost!"

"Allen, I loved you!" quietly and firmly replied the girl.

Simple words, but they fell gratefully on Allen Lester's ear.

"Little Nan, be at rest. You are mine now and for evermore, and death alone shall part us! Are you satisfied now, little Nan?"

"Perfectly!" was the response, as Nan Ashton rested her head lovingly against her lover's shoulder, and looked up into his face with sweet, loving grace.

The bright, sunny August days came round, and brought with them the double wedding Nan Ashton had prophesied to George Holman.

When he had entered the carriage, and they were fairly off, he once again clasped her to him, exclaiming,—

"Nan, all this, our joy and happiness, would not be ours to-day were it not for my little Nan's FAITH!"

[THE END.]

A Vassar girl being asked why some of the students were so eager to learn to play the violin instead of the piano, replied: "Oh, that's so they may have a sure chance to draw a bean!" (bow.)

## PACLETTE.

Somebody wants to know what is more disagreeable than a "woman with a crying baby?" The answer to this is "the baby."

When a man is dismissed from employment, he always has a good deal to say against his late employers. A man, in fact, is like a gun. He makes a great noise when he is discharged.

"I wish I had lived in the days of Adam and Eve," said a tired-looking man. "Why so?" asked a friend. "Because I should not have been so intolerably bored by hearing people bewail the good old times of their ancestors."

When a young man in the country walks with a girl as though he was afraid someone would see him, the girl is his sister. If he walks so close to her as to nearly crowd her against the fence, she is someone else's sister.

"No," said Fogg, when his physician told him that his blood was in an impoverished condition and needed to be stirred up: "no, Doctor, I cannot permit it. It would be wrong for us to stir up bad blood."

"It is rather strange, but there goes a man who can never keep money." "Nothing strange about it. He can't keep money because he can't keep something else." "What's that?" "A sober."

Sam the green but ambitious young man to the village chorister: "I want to join your choir." "Your services are not re-quired," answered the chorister. "But isn't my voice a bary-tone?" asked the young man. "A wheelbarrow tone!" sneered the chorister.

"Etta! I love thee alone. Indeed I speak the truth!" He paused—the blush o'erspread her dimpled cheek. She let him draw her near. Scare for emotion could she speak. Yet still she asked in accents meek, "And how much have you a year?"

SCENE: Fashionable watering-place in north of Scotland. English lady-visitor, who is suffering from toothache: "I say, gardener, have you a dentist here?" Old Gardener: "Yess, mem—yess, mem." Lady-visitor: "Does he extract teeth with the aid of gas?" Old Gardener: "Blissus a! mem, we has eye and daylight here!"

A dinner at a restaurant table displayed signs of irritation just because the waiter happened to have spilled a plate of soup over his coat. "Don't worry, sir, don't worry," said the head waiter; "it is seven o'clock." "What has that got to do with it?" cried the victim. "After half-past six, sir, our soup doesn't grease—hot water, sir, that is all."

The Colonel: "Great Caesar! Another hat? You are the most extravagant woman in England. Why, I believe you have got a different hat for every day in the week." Mrs. Colonel: "Why, of course I have! That's just it. I have one for every day in the week, but none for Sunday. I want a finer one for Sunday."

"You have missed great opportunities, Colonel," said a man at the funeral of a friend. "Now, here is our friend P. died and left £1,000,000. You and he commenced life together. You haven't saved your money, and he did." "Yes," assented the colonel, "and there he is in a coffin, going on a long journey without a farthing in his pocket, while I'm alive, and got a £20 note in mine. The first speaker lost interest in the conversation."

LAWYER (to witness): "Did you see that tree near the roadside?" Witness: "Yes, sir; I saw it very plainly." LAWYER: "It was very conspicuous, then?" Witness: "Well, I can't say that. I saw the tree very plainly, though." LAWYER: "I would like to know why, if it was plain, it wasn't conspicuous. What is the difference between plain and conspicuous? Answer that, will you?" Witness: "Well, it is this: I come into this court-room and glance over the bar. I see you plainly among the other lawyers, although you ain't a bit conspicuous."



## SOCIETY.

THE QUEEN has paid several visits to the widow of Edmunston, one of the workmen on the Royal estate, who was drowned recently at Crathie. Her Majesty has also visited Mr. Robertson, a local farmer, who is at present unwell. The Duke of Connaught and Prince Henry of Battenberg have enjoyed excellent sport in the Balmoral deer forests during the last few days. On the 10th a royal stag fell to the gun of the Duke of Connaught, and on the previous day Prince Henry brought down a royal with a splendid head.

The arrangements for the visit of the Prince of Wales to Birmingham in November have been completed. The Prince will travel from Euston, arriving at New-street Station at two o'clock on Friday, the 27th. He will be met by the Mayor, the Lord-Lieutenant of the County, Lord Leigh, and Mr. Jaffray, whose hospital he will open. After inspecting the wards and receiving addresses, he will proceed to Perry Hall, the residence of the Hon. Mr. Calthorpe, whose guest he will be. On Saturday morning the Prince will return to Birmingham, to pay his promised visit to the Cattle Show, and he will afterwards open the Corporation Art Gallery.

The two pages who bore Lady Mary Primrose's train on the occasion of her marriage with Mr. Hope, on the 8th ult., were dressed in white satin fancy costumes of Elizabethan period. The bride wore white cut velvet, trimmed with point d'Alençon, the seven bridesmaids costumes being of white muslin, with blue sashes, stockings, and shoes.

Each wore a turquoise anchor, with diamond cable as a brooch, the gift of the bridegroom. The Earl of Rosebery, for a wedding present, gave his sister a cheque for £3,000, while one for £1,000 was given by the Duke of Cleveland to his stepdaughter.

THE DUCHESS OF ALBANY, in order to make a leisurely ascent of Loch-na-gar, started a few days ago for the hut at Alt-na-guisach, where she was to pass a couple of nights. The Duchess, however, was overtaken by a snowstorm when at the summit, and it was with great difficulty that she was able to return, the paths being exceedingly dangerous in thick weather. When she arrived at Alt-na-guisach she was detained there, weather-bound, for three more days before she could get down to Aberfeldy.

ACCORDING to present arrangements, the Duke of Connaught will ere long return to India, a project to which Her Majesty is much adverse. His Royal Highness will in all probability replace Lieutenant-General Hardinge as head of the army of the Western Presidency; this would fix the Duke's headquarters at Bombay.

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH has been staying for a few days at Coburg. The Duchess, with the Countess Erbach, nee Battenberg, in the meantime remained at Friedrichshafen, on the Lake of Constance. Only very recently three ladies narrowly escaped a severe accident. The train in which they were travelling from Heidelberg to Darmstadt came into collision with a goods train, several waggons of which were wrecked, although no one suffered injury in the passenger train, three hours' delay being the only inconvenience experienced. The Duke and Duchess have returned to England and proceeded to Eastwell Park.

A MARRIAGE has been arranged between Sir Richard William Bulkeley, Bart., of Baron Hill, and Lady Magdalen Yorke, second daughter of the Earl of Hardwicke. A marriage will shortly take place between Lady Dorothy Wallop, fourth daughter of the Earl and Countess of Portsmouth, and Mr. R. N. Rycroft, Rifle Brigade, eldest son of Sir Nelson Rycroft, Bart., of Calton, York.

In Spanish Court circles it is rumoured that a union is contemplated between the Infanta Enlalia, the youngest sister of King Alfonso, and the Heir-Apparent of the Crown of Portugal.

## STATISTICS.

**RAILWAYS OF THE WORLD.**—At the end of 1879 there were in the whole world 950,031 kilometres of railways, which by 1883 had increased to 442,199. Of the 92,168 kilometres constructed in that period the United States were responsible for 56,327, while of the more backward railway-making countries 3,727 kilometres were made in Mexico, 2,160 in British North America, 2,050 in Brazil, 2,786 in India, 3,603 in Australia, and 1,166 in Algeria and Tunis. Of the European States the most active countries in constructing railways during the four years were France with 4,500 kilometres, Germany with 2,716, and Austria-Hungary with 2,263; while, on the other hand, the countries with the oldest railway systems and the densest population made comparatively few extensions, Great Britain being only at the rate of 1,399 kilometres, Belgium of 257, Holland of 282, and Switzerland of 302. The proportion of new lines to the existing ones during the period was 5 per cent. for Great Britain, 6½ per cent. for Belgium, 12½ for Holland, 12 for Switzerland, 18 for France, 42 for the United States, 67 for Brazil, and 335 per cent. for Mexico.

## GEMS.

KEEP your eyes turned inward upon yourself, and beware of judging others. In judging others a man labours to no purpose, commonly errs, and easily sins; but in examining and judging himself he is always wisely and usefully employed.

A wise man will never rust out. As long as he breathes the breath of life he will be doing something for himself, his country, or posterity.

"A JUDICIOUS wife," said John Ruskin, "is always nipping off from her husband's moral nature little twigs that are growing in wrong directions. She keeps him in shape by continual pruning."

He that has never changed any of his opinions has never corrected any of his mistakes; and he who was never wise enough to find out any mistakes in himself will assuredly not be charitable enough to excuse what he reckons mistakes in others.

WHENEVER we find a man who enjoys a wide popularity, we may be assured, however bad his reputation may be, that he has some good qualities in an eminent degree.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**PEARL PARSNIPS.**—Parboil the fruit in just enough water to cover them. When done, place the pears on a platter. Then take as many pounds of sugar as there were pears before they were boiled, and place the sugar in the water the pears boiled in. When it comes to a boil drop in the pears, and cook until they are soft enough not to fall to pieces.

**BAKED TOMATOES.**—Pare with a sharp knife and cut in slices, put a layer of crumbs in the bottom of a bake dish, wet them with a little soup stock or other gravy, cover with tomatoes, seasoned with butter, salt, pepper, and sugar, more crumbs moistened with gravy, and so on to the top of the dish, having well-moistened crumbs for the last layer, cover and bake half-an-hour, then uncover and brown quickly; serve in the bake dish.

**BOILED MUTTON.**—The leg is best for this purpose, and will look much nicer when served if it has been tied up in very coarse, thin muslin, or in a mosquito netting. Put on in plenty of boiling salted water and cook a quarter of an hour to the pound; unwrap when done, brush all over with butter, and serve with a boat of drawn butter, in which have been stirred two dozen capers or pickled nasturtium seed.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

**HUMAN LIFE.**—Hope writes the poetry of the boy, but memory that of the man. Man looks forward with smiles, but backward with sighs. Such is the wise providence of Heaven. The cup of life is sweeter at the brim; the flavour is impaired as we drink deeper, and the dregs are made bitter that we may not struggle when it is taken from our lips.

**WEAK AND SHORT-SIGHTED AFFECTION.**—To teach a youth to bear what is disagreeable and irksome without complaint may at first sight seem at variance with the sympathetic attitude, but in truth it is only real sympathy projected forward into the child's maturer years. That affection which shields him from every rough wind, which listens to every complaint and removes its source, which resents with indignation every supposed affront or injury offered him, is a weak and short-sighted one, which, for the sake of the present gratification and ease of its object, wrecks his future prospects by depriving him of the element of manliness.

**FLOWERS IN WINTER.**—For the winter garden nothing can be more satisfactory than a good assortment of bulbs. Only the hyacinths are at all costly. For the large substitute a pot of feathered grape and musk hyacinth will answer. They are white, blue, rose, purple, and yellow. Try the bright ixias, and scillas, and the golden fragrant jonquils. The ixias are in all the colours of the rainbow, and are curiously shaped; very fine for pot culture; planted in light, mellow soil in November, they will bloom till mid-winter. The scillas, with their intensely blue clusters of flowers, thrown up without foliage like the autumn crocus, need to be grown in masses. Tulips are admirable for the house. Try bulbs for the window garden, and see if you do not find more pleasure in them, with less care, than anything you have heretofore had.

**ENVY.**—The greatest flood has the soonest ebb, the sorest tempest the most sudden calm, the hottest love the coldest end, and from the deepest desire oftentimes ensues the deadliest hate. A wise man had rather be envied for providence than pitied for prodigality. Revenge basketh only at the stars, and spite spurts at that she cannot reach. An envious man waxeth lean with the fatness of his neighbours. Envy is the daughter of pride, the author of murder and revenge, the beginner of secret sedition, and the perpetual tormentor of virtue. Envy is the filthy sediment of the soul—a venom, a poison, a quicksilver—which consumeth the flesh and drieth up the marrow of the bones.

**SAVE WISDOM.**—Look most to your spending. No matter what comes in, if more goes out you will always be poor. The art is not in making money, but in keeping it. Little expenses, like mice in a barn, when they are many, make great waste. Hair by hair heads get bald; straw by straw the thatch goes off the cottage; and drop by drop the rain comes into the chamber. A barrel is soon empty if the tap leaks but a drop a minute. When you mean to save begin with your mouth; there are many thieves down the red lane. The ale-jug is a great waste. In all other things keep within compass. Never stretch your legs further than the blankets will reach, or you will soon be cold. In clothes choose suitable and lasting stuff, and not tawdry fineries. To be warm is the main thing; never mind the looks. A fool may make money, but it needs a wise man to spend it. Remember it is easier to build two chimneys than to keep one going. If you give all to the back and board, there is nothing left for the savings bank. Fare hard and work hard while you are young, and you have a chance to rest when you are old.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**STARS AND STRIPES.**—Apply to the American Embassy.

**LEO.**—If efficacious, which we doubt very much, it should be mixed with the starch.

**A TRUE LOVER.**—Eighteen or nineteen is quite early enough for a young lady to get engaged.

**P. F. W.**—It is not proper to allow such familiarity on the part of a gentleman. You write very nicely.

**C. H. H.**—Physicians differ in opinion with regard to keeping growing plants in a bedroom. There seems to be no evidence that the practice is harmful.

**M. G. W.**—Steel engraving is an excellent trade provided one has the necessary ability to master it and prove a good workman.

**T. P. S.**—We do not think that there is any harm in this; but the fact of your feeling that there may be is a good reason for discontinuing it.

**M. W. R.**—You and your lover should submit to your parents. If he will not wait for you, under the circumstances, he is not worth having.

**R. R. S.**—If the divorce obtained by your husband was absolute, you are at liberty to marry again; but if he procured merely a separation, you cannot.

**S. T. L.**—We advise you to go back to your husband directly. You have acted very foolishly in leaving him without any real justification.

**W. W.**—To effect your purpose on the glass bottle soak the thread in any good spirit, tie it round the vessel, and then set fire to it.

**L. L.**—The age of the person your name is, we believe, between forty-five and fifty; we are not aware, however, that his biography has yet been written.

**K. K.**—The only composition of which we have any knowledge is simply clay; with that natural material we have always seen grating successfully accomplished.

**C. R.**—The fact of the father being a member of a militia corps will certainly not remove from him the legal liability of supporting his own child.

**W. H. H.**—We would advise you not to visit the young lady until you are invited by her to do so. You write very well.

**THANKFUL.**—Have the hair cut regularly, and apply a mixture of tincture of cantharides and sweet oil. Any chemist will give the proportions.

**B. H.**—We are not in a position to tell you positively whether the gentleman you name would give the lessons required; it is, however, most probable that he would.

**R. R.**—You are neither a blonde nor a brunette. You can wear with advantage dark browns and reds, and indeed most dark colours, except blues. Avoid all light neutral colours and greys.

**C. M.**—Accountants can be legally authorised to collect and make arrangements for the payment of debts. We cannot, however, undertake to recommend any particular firm.

**L. H.**—The word nave, architecturally, is derived from the Saxon, and means the body or middle part of a church, between the aisles, reaching from the rail or balustrade of the choir to the chief door.

**L. D. T.**—This young man acts like a trifler, and we advise you to pay no heed to him until he voluntarily returns and seeks a reconciliation. Do not try to win him back. It will be useless.

**F. W. W.**—Tell the young lady your circumstances, and then you can advise together as to whether you have sufficient to justify your marriage, or whether it is better to postpone it until you are better off.

**T. R.**—Kissing should be very discreetly and sparingly indulged in, and only when a beau shows signs of sincere attachment and intention of marriage. It is a poor plan to gossip about friends either male or female.

**E. M. M.**—The best thing to do is to go personally to the young lady and urge your suit. The letter may not have reached her. In any case a personal interview is best. You will win if you are manly and gentle.

**T. T. B.**—The parents and other family relatives of the wedded pair have precedence in congratulating them. A groomsmen need only give them a cordial grasp of the hand and wish them prosperity and happiness.

**W. W.**—They are too closely related to make a marriage between them desirable, but there is no evidence to show that the offspring of healthy parents so related are inferior to other children, physically or intellectually.

**W. O. W.**—The first thing to do is to call upon the young lady and apologise for your part in the quarrel. Then you may seek to be restored to favour by making yourself as agreeable to her as possible. A little present would facilitate a reconciliation.

**L. L. T.**—It is not polite for a gentleman to take a lady's arm, but to offer his arm to the lady and she should take it. Your writing is very good. It is not too large. You can improve by practice. Balaklava is a famous place in the Crimea in the south of Russia.

**W. M.**—You say you are learning the art of photography, and wish to know how to make rice glue. Mix some ground rice in a little cold water, and then slowly bring the mixture to a boiling point; it is very white and susceptible of a high polish.

**R. R. A.**—In such a case a lady must take into account the sincerity and manliness of her admirer. The one who openly and bravely declares his love and his desire of marriage deserves consideration. Let them know that you do not intend to fall between two stools. Your old beau should come forward.

**GEORGE.**—Give him a book like Smiles's "Self Help," or a good biography. There are many other things you might give, such as a purse, a ring, gloves, or tie; but much depends on the disposition and general tastes of the individual. Writing fair, but wants constant practice.

**F. M.**—You had better not try to break off the engagement of your old beau. Accept the situation and invite other company. There are as good fish in the sea as ever was caught. It is probable that you will waste time and effort if you endeavour to win him back. Leave him to his new flame.

**L. T. M.**—If you should write to some one living in your native place, in Scotland, giving the name of your father and the maiden name of your mother, as well as your own name, it is possible that some of the old neighbours of your parents would be able to furnish the information which you desire.

**Y. L.**—To clean alabaster take a pint of rain water and two ounces of aquafortis, mixed together; wash the alabaster in this liquid with a brush for five minutes, then rinse it in clean water, wipe it, and place in the sun for two or three hours to dry; no soap must be used, as it discolours the alabaster.

## THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

My father's home, kind stranger,  
I've travelled far to see.  
'Twas here I passed through childhood  
With happy heart and free;  
Through all these shady valleys  
My youthful footsteps strayed.  
But ah, what changes, stranger,  
Two score of years have made!

On memory's page a picture  
Has lingered all these years;  
When far across the ocean  
It often stirred the tears.  
I hoped to find the landscape  
That hung on memory's wall,  
But this now spread before me  
Seems not the same at all.

These hills were lofty mountain  
To me when but a child;  
That brooklet was a river,  
With waters deep and wild;  
And yonder pond an ocean,  
With billows large and grand,  
That swept away the houses  
I built along the strand.

And this is not our farm-house—  
This modern one I see.  
The old well-sweep has vanished;  
The swing and playground tree;  
But, saddest of the changes,  
I miss the faces dear.  
No place is home, kind stranger,  
Without the loved ones near.

H. I. C.

**B. B.**—A good way to clarify dripping is to put it into a basin, pour boiling water over it, and keep stirring to wash away the impurities; let it stand to cool; the water and sediment will settle at the bottom of the basin. You can then remove the dripping, and put it away in jars for use.

**R.**—You ask how a man can know himself. He must study his natural temper, his constitutional inclinations and passions; for by these a man's best judgment is easily perverted; they are the inlets of prejudice, the unguarded avenues of the mind, by which a thousand errors and secret faults find admission without being observed.

**T. S. V.**—In the time of Augustus the temple of Janus was shut three times, one of which was in the year 750, before the birth of our Saviour, according to Isaiah's prophecy that all the world should be blessed with peace; when the Prince of Peace was born this temple was shut by Vespasian after his triumph over the Jews.

**L. S.**—To make good lavender water take four drachms of the best English oil of lavender,  $\frac{1}{2}$  a drachm of oil of cloves, 5 grains of musk, 6 oz. of spirits of wine, a little water, mix the oil of lavender with some of the spirit first, then add the other ingredients, let it stand, cork it well for about two months, but shake frequently.

**C. T. D.**—There is nothing for you to do except to give all letters and presents sent to you by your unworthy lover, to request yours in return, and to have nothing more to do with him. You have been treated very badly, but the girl who does eventually marry such a man is much more to be pitied than you.

**B. P.**—The energy and ambition which you exhibit are deserving of sympathy; but you do wrong in seeking to enter into business arrangements with strangers without letting your husband know it. A wife should never do such a thing as that. Besides, the fact that you want to keep the matter secret from your husband would prejudice any business man against you, and prevent him from having anything to do with such a project.

**C. H.**—The word motto is derived from the Italian, and is used to signify a word or sentence added to a device, and is commonly applied when put on a scroll as an external ornament of coat armour. The use of mottoes for this purpose is very ancient, and when appended to a coat-of-arms is frequently hereditary in a family.

**T. V.**—Best assured that female loveliness never appears to more advantage than when decked in simple dress. No artist portrays his figure with feathers and jewellery; these tinseles may serve to give effect on the stage, or on a ballroom floor, but in daily life there is no substitute for simplicity; a vulgar taste is not to be disguised by gold or diamonds.

**A. A. M.**—It is perfectly proper to thank a lady for an invitation to call under such circumstances. The young lady probably meant to encourage you to call. We think that if you are worthy of her you may win her. Faint heart never won a fair lady yet. You must show that you are rich in strength of mind and heart if not in purse. Accept her invitation to call. Do not be too hasty.

**W. B. M.**—Your fault is that you are an indolent young man, and think to lead a happy life by shrinking from all the responsibilities of true manhood. An industrious poor man is happier than an idle rich one; an indolently inclined young person can neither make nor keep property, and we have high authority for this. "He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster."

**M. F.**—Your marriage would be legal if performed under the name by which you have been known since you were ten years of age. A man or an unmarried woman may legally adopt any name he or she pleases without obtaining the Queen's permission. On making the change, however, it is necessary to advertise the fact in the public newspapers.

**J. F. H.**—Maundy Thursday is the day before Good Friday. The word is supposed to be derived from the Saxon—*vi*, Maund, a basket, because on that day alms were distributed to the poor; others say that it received its name from Dies Mandati, the day of command, the command being that which Christ gave His disciples, in order to commemorate Him in the last supper or communion which He that day instituted.

**ELLEN F.**—Your deafness would not be a serious obstacle to your obtaining public employment, but unless you can undergo the examination of the Civil Service examiners you could not get a situation. Make your application to the head of the department which you wish to enter. There is a small book published with the names of all the public officials and forms of application.

**R. S. S.**—It is not a good plan for a lady to cast off her old friend because she happens to make a new acquaintance whom she fancies. Retain both admirers as friends. When you become engaged make your engagement known, and you will not be troubled with rival suitors, but until you are engaged treat all your admirers very much alike.

**M. T.**—The passage to which you refer is probably this:

"He that hath light within his own clear breast  
May sit in the centre and enjoy bright day;  
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,  
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun,  
Himself is his own dungeon."

**J. H. S.**—1. Red ink: Ball four ounces of ground Brazil wood in three pints of vinegar until reduced to about one pint and a half, add three ounces of powdered rock alum, and filter. Green ink: The best consists of methyl iodide, dissolved in about one hundred parts of water. A cheaper green ink is made by oxidising aceto-nitrate of chrome, and dissolving the resulting green powder in water.

**T. H. H.**—If you are convinced that the man is insincere, that he does not love you, and that his professions of attachment are a sham, it would be the part of wisdom for you to let him go altogether. To keep up a hypocritical relationship of affection with him, when you know that he is actually a hypocrite, will be apt to render you more and more miserable as time goes on. Your best course would be to have a truthful understanding with him at once, and abide the result.

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